

HISTORY OF THE  
GENERAL BAPTIST CHURCH,  
FRIAR LANE, LEICESTER.

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HISTORY  
OF THE  
GENERAL BAPTIST CHURCH

*MEETING AT*  
FRIAR LANE, LEICESTER.

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1656 — 1896.

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BY JAMES W. SMITH.  
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## Dedication.

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TO THE MEMORY OF  
SAMUEL WRIGHT, SENIOR,  
WHO WAS FOR 58 YEARS A MEMBER,  
AND FOR NEARLY 42 YEARS A DEACON  
OF THE FRIAR LANE  
GENERAL BAPTIST CHURCH, LEICESTER;  
AND WHOSE WHOLE SOUL  
WAS BOUND UP IN ITS INTERESTS;  
WHOSE CAREER WAS CONSISTENT AND HONOURABLE,  
AND WHOSE MEMORY IS REVERED,  
THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED  
BY HIS GRANDSON.



*The Author desires to acknowledge the courtesy of the Pastor and Officers of the Friar Lane Church and Sunday School in placing at his disposal the Records in their possession, and in giving him access to the Trust Deeds and other available documents.*

*He also wishes to express his gratitude to various friends who have lent him Histories, Periodicals, etc., relating to events connected with the Church and School.*

*Every care has been taken to make the work as accurate as possible, but the scarcity of authentic information relating to some periods, has made the compilation no easy task. He trusts, however, the result may prove to be of some value and interest.*



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# FRIAR LANE CHURCH.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

IF it were possible to compile a complete history of the FRIAR LANE CHURCH, we should have practically, in reduced *fac simile*, a history of English Nonconformity.

A church over which life has ebbed and flowed for 250 years; which has seen changes in the dynasty of the nation, in the forms of religion, in the conditions of municipal and social life;—a church which has been harassed by persecution, and torn by division; which has at times almost died out of existence, and then sprung suddenly into life again—the complete history of such a church would, undoubtedly, be an epitome of the history of English Dissent. But unfortunately no such unique history

is possible. Old records have been destroyed, or have disappeared; events which were of vital importance have almost died down into tradition; and it is only when one begins to collect and gather together the scattered fragments into something like a continuous whole, that one sees the blanks that can never be filled—the gaps there is no bridging over.

Every year, too, the historian's task becomes more difficult, and the sources of information more widely diffused and unobtainable.

A desire having been expressed for a permanent record of the past life of this church—a past which contains much that is both instructive and helpful—it has been deemed advisable to put into definite form all the information that can be obtained while traces of its early history exist. The object of this sketch is thus to gather into consecutive order the facts which are ascertainable respecting the 240 years of the church's existence, and get as definite an idea as possible of the changes it has experienced, and the measure in which it has contributed to the evolution of the religious life of the present day.

But in attempting this not merely an antiquarian interest is contemplated. The passionate life of Puritanism — for it had a passion of its own,



suppressed but powerful—has a meaning which this nineteenth century cannot afford to forget. The struggles of our ancestors against religious intolerance, and their efforts to build up a christian community on the broad lines of religious equality, are matters which should cause the foundations of our natures to vibrate, and not merely move our admiration, as for things that “have their day and cease to be.” The past is our heritage, and did we but realise it, a heritage glorious in its traditions, and binding in its solemn obligations. So that in studying for a time the records of a life that is receding rapidly from our view, we have to bear in mind the debt we owe to men whose very names are forgotten, and the tender respect and reverence due to the self-sacrifice of the early workers connected with this ancient church.

The sources from which the materials for this history are derived are mainly these—

1. *The Traditions of the Church*—and these we have to examine and verify to the best of our ability.

2. *The Conveyances and Trust Deeds in existence*—from which can be traced for the past 180 years the various changes which have taken place in the meeting houses which have successively stood on the present site.

3. *The Church Records*—and these unfortunately, to which we might have reasonably looked for vital and consecutive information, are exceedingly fragmentary and incomplete.

4. And lastly, we have to gather together from published histories and reports, from denominational information in magazines, and various other sources, all the direct or collateral information we can, to help us in our research.

## CHAPTER II.

## EARLY TRADITIONS.

IN a small 16 page pamphlet published by Mr. Wigg in 1856, it is stated that the church was probably formed at "the latter end of the Protectorate, about 1656 or 1657." These dates were, however, merely conjectural, and we have distinct evidence that a General Baptist Church existed in the town for some years previous to the time mentioned.

From the Fenstanton Church Records\* we learn that "a meeting of Elders and Brethren from many of the General Baptist Churches was held at Stamford on July 2nd and 3rd, 1656." At this meeting a petition was presented from the General Baptists at Uppingham, requesting that "messengers might be sent into the west for the work of the ministry." This request was complied with by the brethren assembled, and "it was agreed that each messenger should be allowed ten shillings weekly [a very respectable sum in those days] for the support of himself and his family while he was employed

\* Adam Taylor's "History of the General Baptists," vol. i., p. 59.

in this mission ; and certain brethren were appointed by the Assembly to take care of their wives and families in their absence." The Records give in detail the arrangements made for the various districts, and amongst the appointments we find "William Inge and Thomas Christian for *Leicester* ; and to stir up Eccleshilton [Earl Shilton] and Mountsorrell."

This then is the *earliest* mention of the church at Leicester ; but it is significant from this fact, that unless it had been established some considerable time, and was consequently well known, it would not have been made the centre of operations for the two evangelists mentioned in the Fenstanton Records.

As this meeting was held in 1656, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the church had been in existence some ten years, and had consequently shared in all the hopes and fears and excitements which the Commonwealth had caused both to the advocates of religious freedom and the supporters of the divine right of kings.

During the early part of the Protectorate the church was undoubtedly in existence, and its first pastors are said to have been Coniers Congrave and Thomas Rogers ; Wood in his history giving the date of their combined pastorate as 1651. Where the church assembled, or how frequently, is a matter

of mere conjecture; the probability points to a very early location of the church in Friar Lane. Possibly it was in the house of one of its pastors that the gospel was preached to the small band who comprised the first "Meeting."

For the few years that Puritanism was in the ascendant the scattered communities of Dissenters enjoyed considerable freedom in their methods of worship. But this time of immunity quickly disappeared, and, on the accession of Charles the Second, the most rigorous penalties were laid on Dissenters. It is not very surprising therefore that we hear nothing of this small church for some years, compelled as its members were to meet secretly and by stealth.

The Corporation and Test Acts were passed in 1661, and were clearly intended to operate against Protestant Dissenters, of whom the lately restored Royal Party was obviously afraid. The Act provided that "no one should hold any office of trust in any city or corporation who had not within one year previous to his election taken the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, according to the forms and usage of the Church of England."

This prevented any conscientious Dissenter from holding municipal office, and was the beginning of a long period of persecution.



In 1664 the first Conventicle Act was passed, and in order to form some idea of the difficulties which attended the worshippers connected with these small Meeting Houses, it will be as well to enumerate some of its objectionable provisions.

“It further enacts, that if any person above the age of 16 shall, after July 1st, 1664, be present at any meeting, under pretence of the exercise of religion, in any other manner than is allowed by the liturgy of the Church of England, where there shall be present four or more persons beside the householder, shall for the first offence suffer three months’ imprisonment, or forfeit five pounds; for the second offence six months’ imprisonment, or forfeit ten pounds, and for the third offence be banished to some of the American plantations for seven years, or pay a fine of one hundred pounds, and in case of returning or making their escape, such persons shall be adjudged felons and suffer death.”

These were the penalties the members of the Friar Lane Church had to face in meeting for religious worship. But this was not all. “Those who suffered conventicles in their houses or barns were liable to the same forfeitures as those who attended; and married women taken at conventicles were to be imprisoned for twelve months unless

their husbands paid forty shillings for their release.”\*

These Acts were not merely a dead letter, but were freely and constantly employed for the persecution of Baptist and other congregations. Here, for instance, is a case in which possibly some of the members of Friar Lane Church may have been concerned. The Leicester town records state that “In the month of February [1671], Thomas Ludlam, a constable, with John Veasey and Thos. Laxton, churchwardens, having received information that a ‘conventicle’ was about to be held in a house in All Saints’ Parish, at three o’clock in the afternoon of Sunday (the 12th), went there and found several persons assembled. They ascertained the names of the two men and the eight women, but heard neither praying nor preaching. At the March Assizes following the Mayor enquired of Judge Wyndham whether the meeting was a conventicle according to the Act of Parliament, being anxious to secure a conviction. His Lordship’s reply was that it was not so; and if Mr. Mayor and the Justices should make a warrant of distress, an action might be brought against them by the defendants.”† And so this little company narrowly escaped a conviction,

\* Adam Taylor, vol. i., p. 180.

† Thompson’s “History of Leicester,” p. 430.

for had either preaching or praying been heard they would undoubtedly have been sentenced.

In 1672 the severity of these laws was somewhat relaxed, and an indulgence was granted by the King for suspending the penal enactments against Dissenters. It was in consequence of this indulgence that John Bunyan visited Leicester as a Dissenting preacher. He had previously been in the town as a Roundhead soldier at the time of the siege—it was now in a very different capacity that he came.

It would be interesting to know definitely where he preached, and how many were attracted by his visit. That his mission was to the *Baptist* Church there is not the slightest doubt, but it is uncertain whether the services were held in the open air, or in the house that was afterwards used by the congregation, and which was situated “down a long, narrow, dark entry leading from the street.” The town records show that he produced to the Mayor and Justices his license as a preacher, without which it would have been felony for him to have given public religious instruction.\* We may assume, then, that it was near the spot on which the present chapel stands that the immortal John Bunyan spoke to this little church, and strengthened the

\* Thompson's History, vol. ii., p. 430.

faith of the people in the ultimate triumph of the gospel. No further visits of this kind were, however, possible, for early the next year the King had retracted his indulgence, and the Conventicle Act was enforced with its former severity.

Things continued in this condition until 1689, when, by the influence of William III., the Toleration Act was passed. This Act secured to Dissenters immunity from persecution on account of religious belief, and freedom to worship according to the dictates of their consciences; it also protected their Meeting Houses from assault. It may be noted, however, that the Conventicle Act and the Five Mile Act were not finally repealed till 1812.

External matters having so far improved, it was only natural that the small company of Leicester Baptists should shew signs of renewed life. The first 50 years of the church's existence had been mainly a struggle against persecution and repression, and their progress was consequently slow. Scattered in all parts of the town and neighbourhood, unable to meet at any fixed time or place, the cause had almost died out, as is evidenced by the following return:—

“In 1705 Mr. Cart, one of the churchwardens of St. Martins Parish, found 65 Independents or Presbyterians, *six* Anabaptists, 13 Quakers, and two

‘Papists’ living in the parish. In 1709 another parochial return was made to the Bishop of the Diocese, when the numbers seem to have decreased, there being then 42 Independents or Presbyterians, eight Quakers, *two* Baptists and four Roman Catholics. At the date of the last return, a Baptist meeting house existed in St. Martin’s Parish, at which persons named . . . . . Davye (Leicester) and Stanton (Belgrave) preached on Sundays.”\*

This date (1709) is the first mention of the Meeting House being in Friar Lane, although it is probable that for some 50 years previously the church had held intermittent gatherings in the same locality. Here then tradition ends, and absolute records take the place of conjectures and probabilities.

\* Thompson’s History, vol. ii., p. 261.



## CHAPTER III.

## HISTORICAL RECORDS.

THE mention in Mr. Cart's return to the Bishop of the names of Stanton and Davyc brings us into direct relation with historical records, for these are the names of two of the trustees for the first Meeting House which belonged to the church.

The first deed relating to the chapel property is dated August 6th, 1719, and by it Elias Wallin the elder, and other persons, conveyed to twelve trustees "The two cottages, or tenements with their appurtenances, situated in Fryer Lane, also all that yard, piece or parcel of ground adjoining and belonging to the said cottages; and also all that newly erected edifice or building, containing three bays of buildings with their appurtenances, standing on the said yard or parcel of ground, and used as a place for divine worship."

The names of the trustees were—

Henry Green, hosier,

Zachariah Read, taylor,

Thos. Stanton, of Mountsorrell,

John Cave, of Bishopps Fee, hosier,  
Wm. Arnold, baker,  
Geo. Kestin, framework knitter,  
Thos. Storer, framework knitter,  
John Iliffe, yeoman,  
Zachariah Stanton, of Humberstone, hosier,  
Thos. Davye, scrivener,  
Jno. Coltman, woolcomber,  
Elias Wallin, the younger.

The deed also gave them power to "use and employ the said yard or piece of ground for a burying place for the said Protestant Dissenting Assembly or Congregation called the Baptists."

From this date the church had a building of its own, which it has enlarged and improved from time to time according to its requirements.

And now a word as to the position of this sanctuary—for a sanctuary it was in the truest sense of the term to these persecuted Baptists. As we have seen, the insecurity attending religious services did not prompt our ancestors to build their places of worship in prominent and conspicuous positions. Instead of this, they were glad to hide them away from the public gaze, so that they might enjoy all the privacy possible under such unfavourable conditions. As the townspeople walked down Friar Lane there was no indication of any Meeting

House being there. For nearly a century later than this the street frontage was occupied by dwelling houses, and the approach to this obscure place of worship was down a long, dark, passage between these houses. The building was entirely hidden from the street, and was so insignificant that, even with the town so small as it was at that period, but few persons seem to have been aware of its existence.

Although the church now possessed a building of its own, and may for a time have revived, it seems soon to have sunk into almost absolute oblivion. For *thirty years* (from 1720 to 1750) we have no trace of its existence, although at the latter date the membership numbered some 40 persons. The obscurity of the cause is evinced by the fact that when Mr. Samuel Deacon, of Barton, was staying in the town some 20 years later, he endeavoured to discover the existence of the chapel. He had heard there was a Baptist cause in Leicester—a cause that *had* been well known—but although he made many enquiries, and watched the people going to the different places of worship on Sundays, he left Leicester, after a residence of some months, without being able to discover the whereabouts of the General Baptist church. This shows how greatly the cause must have diminished, when a prominent General

Baptist minister could not discover any trace of the congregation with which he was most in sympathy.

The first Church Minute Book in existence dates back to 1750, and is in many respects an interesting document. The early entries are made in exceedingly clear and beautiful writing, and were evidently the work of a man of considerable education, for 140 years ago, it must be remembered, only a few persons in a community were able to write with anything like freedom.

The Record consists of a list of the members, and there is no further entry again for 30 years. It is in these terms:—

“A Register of the names of the members of the Church of Christ in and about Leicester of Baptiz'd Believers, who profess the faith of Christ as delivered in Heb. 6, 12, &c., Anno Dom: 1750, and who belong to the church meeting in Leicester.”

And then follow the names of 19 males and 24 females—names which have no longer any meaning for us, except as being those of the men and women who shared in the hopes and fears and struggles incident to those times.

During the next 30 years, of which we have no direct record, efforts were evidently made to keep the church in existence; for we find that the Rev. J. Donisthorpe, who was co-pastor with Mr. Grimley

at Loughborough, preached at Leicester occasionally. It was no uncommon thing for these old General Baptist ministers to walk 15 or 20 miles on the Sunday for the sake of encouraging scattered assemblies of believers by the preaching of the gospel.

But the effort on the part of the Loughborough friends to revive the cause here was almost hopeless. The congregations gradually dwindled, and there is little doubt the cause would have become extinct, had it not been for the small endowment that the chapel property secured to the minister or elder. Those "two cottages or tenements with their appurtenances" seem to have been the salvation of the cause, and kept it from altogether disappearing.

At this time (about 1780) an old man named Green, who lived at Earl Shilton, and was nominal elder, received the income from the property. He was too old and infirm to visit Leicester frequently, had he been able to secure a congregation; but he used to come over some four or five times a year, and speak to the few people who could be got together to hear him.

The Barton Church had made several attempts to establish the new connexion in the town, but had been unsuccessful; and altogether the Baptist

cause was at about as low an ebb as could possibly be imagined.

According to human methods of reasoning, hope of a revival must be abandoned. But how frequently we see that "man's extremity is God's opportunity," and the most unlikely means are productive of successful results. And so it happened in this case. The very persecution and intolerance that would have stamped the last traces of life out of this small church proved the incentive to a speedy and lasting revival.

It occurred in this way. A family of the name of Brothers, who were members of the Loughborough Church, came to live in Leicester—this was in the year 1781. Shortly after their removal one of their children died, and application was made to the clergyman of the parish for its burial. As, however, the child was unbaptized, the clergyman refused to bury it in the consecrated ground of the church. Denied admission to the churchyard, the distressed parents were sorely troubled what course to adopt. At last, however, they decided to send to their own minister at Loughborough and ask him to come over and bury the child in the small graveyard belonging to the Friar Lane Meeting House. Mr. Grimley sent over Mr. Pollard (who was then a young man) to officiate

at the funeral, and a sermon was preached that evidently made a deep impression on the few hearers. After the funeral, as was the invariable custom in those days, the family invited Mr. Pollard to supper, and also asked several of the old members of the almost extinct church to meet him. The conversation turned on the low condition of the cause, and the lack of vital religion amongst the members, and Mr. Pollard spoke to the friends assembled with such effect, that at last one of them with great earnestness called out to him, "Young man, we are six of us now with you, and we are all apostates." The divine message had at last appealed to their souls; the dry bones were re-clothed with vigorous life, and this small remnant of a church there and then determined to unite in consecrating themselves afresh to the service of God. Immediate steps were taken for re-establishing the work of the church; the friends at Barton and Loughborough alternately supplied preachers, and in a short time a respectable and earnest congregation was again gathered within the old walls of the Meeting House.

The rapid change that followed, although there is no recorded history of it, may easily be gathered from the following passage which occurs in the Rev. Dan Taylor's diary: "On Lord's-day"—this was

in 1782; only one year after the church was practically extinct—"I had the pleasure of hearing Mr. R—— at Leicester. I preached there in the afternoon and evening to very great crowds. I met the few people on Monday, and gave them advice respecting settling in a church state, &c. Preached again to a vast crowd."

On May 27th, 1782, we find this minute in the Church Book :—

"At a meeting held at Leicester, were present Mr. Linthwaite, Mr. Johnson, Mr. John Clark, Mr. Jos. Holland, Mr. Josiah Clark, Mr. T. Kestin, Mary Hughes.

Witnesses—Dan Taylor, John Deacon.

- 1.—Resolved unanimously, that we cordially unite in a desire and resolution, to exert ourselves in promoting the interest of Jesus Christ in this place.
2. —Resolved unanimously, that we desire Mr. John Deacon to undertake the ministry amongst us, and in due time to fix his abode, and settle his secular concerns, so that he may labour among us stately.
- 3.—We advise if he pleases that he would also preach in villages round about when convenient.
4. Resolved unanimously, that we will propose ourselves, the first convenient opportunity, to that body of General Baptists to which Mr. Deacon is united, in order that we may be of that connexion.
- 5.—Resolved unanimously, that we will take care to call a meeting next Lord's Day, and then form those proposals we intend to make to Mr. Deacon.



6.—If Mr. Deacon gives us encouragement so to do, we intend to request from the church at Barton that they will please to set Mr. Deacon at liberty to minister the word and ordinances statedly among us.”

So runs this interesting church minute, and appended to it one month later are the names of 21 males and 14 females.

Before commencing to describe a new and far more successful epoch than the church had yet passed through, it may be well to recapitulate the principal features of the church's early history.

Founded, as we have seen, at the time of the Commonwealth, it was not until it had been in existence some sixty years that it secured permanent premises of its own, and for a further period of sixty years its work seems to have been carried on within the most prescribed limits. From the first, however, it appears to have had a tolerably regular succession of pastors. The two who conjointly for some years after its formation served the church were Coniers Congrave and Thomas Rogers. In 1719, at the time of the conveyance of the property, Mr. T. Davye was its pastor. He was a man of considerable standing in the town, being, as the Trust Deed states, a “scrivener,” or attorney by profession. That he possessed literary abilities of no mean order is evidenced by the fact that he

published what is described as "an able and well-written work, entitled 'The Baptism of Adult Believers only, Asserted and Vindicated, and that of Infants Disproved.'"

Following Mr. Davye, Mr. Wm. Arnold became the minister, and for nearly thirty years faithfully served the small congregation of Baptists who assembled in the Friar Lane Meeting House. He was by trade a baker; the ministry of that day being composed principally of men who during the week followed some ordinary occupation. The number of members during his ministry was only 31, and probably the whole congregation did not greatly exceed this. After Mr. Arnold, three ministers succeeded each other in quick succession, their names being Mr. J. Johnson, Mr. S. Durance, and Mr. R. Green. The latter gentleman was pastor of the church at Earl Shilton, and the cause had so far declined that he only visited them five or six times a year.

The Meeting House was, as we have seen, "down a long, narrow, dark entry, leading from the street," obscure and insignificant; giving no indication that it would ever emerge into the importance the present buildings now possess.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE SETTLEMENT OF THE REV. JNO. DEACON.

ALTHOUGH the Baptist cause was at such a low ebb in 1782, it is very evident there must have been a considerable number of people in the town who sympathised with the religious sentiments of this small community. Otherwise there is nothing to account for the fact that the preaching of the Rev. Dan Taylor could draw "great crowds."

His visit to Leicester in this year was productive of good and far-reaching results to the small church it was his primary object to revive. His advice to the people "respecting settling in a church state" was apparently acted on with great promptitude. During this year a young man had been studying with Mr. Taylor, preparing for the Baptist ministry, and it is highly probable that it was in compliance with Mr. Taylor's suggestions that their thoughts turned towards this young student. He was only 21 years of age, but the name of Deacon had already become a watch-word among Leicestershire Baptists, so that in inviting Mr. John Deacon, the son of Mr. Samuel Deacon,

of Barton Fabis, to be their minister, the Friar Lane Church was soliciting the services of one whose family bore high and honourable traditions.

At this time personal freedom in the churches was exercised under what may seem to us somewhat peculiar restrictions. The application for Mr. Deacon to become their minister was not alone made directly to him personally; for no settlement would have been permitted without the sanction of the church of which he was a member. Considerable formalities and protracted negotiations seem to have been peculiarly acceptable to these early churches, and all appointments were ratified by the Conference.

A letter was accordingly sent to the Barton Fabis Church, and the result of the application is formally recorded in the Friar Lane Minute Book as follows:—

“Pursuant to the advice given by Mr. Taylor, May 27th, 1782, the members petitioned the church at Barton for Bro. Deacon’s dismissal from them to the church at Leicester, which petition was presented by Bro. Kestin, Bro. Linthwaite, and Bro. Robt. Ward, at Hugglescote, July 6th, 1783. It was granted the 27th and a letter of dismissal and recommendation wrote, and signed in the name of the church at Barton, by S. Deacon, 4th August, 1783.”

Fortunately the letter referred to in this minute has been preserved. We say fortunately, for it is

exceedingly valuable, both for throwing a side-light on the methods of procedure in those old world days, and still more valuable for the reminder it carries with it of a truth we in these times have almost lost sight of. In the revolt of our modern churches against ecclesiastical authority, one of the most lamentable things is that we are not only in danger of losing our proper regard for the preacher as a man, but we are in greater danger of sacrificing our respect,—we would almost say, our *reverence*,—for the pastoral office. These forefathers of ours believed God's minister *was* God's minister, and as such, as the bearer of a divine message and the helper in a divine work they received him amongst them.

This letter then comes as an admonition made venerable by the lapse of over one hundred years. It reads thus :—

*“A Copy of BRO. DEACON'S Letter of Dismission, &c.*

“Dear Friends,

“We have deliberately considered your request and with a good deal of self-denial grant your desire, from a conviction of the urgency of your state, and the evident preference Bro. Jno. Deacon gives to Leicester. Yet, brethren, we are considerably affected with the matter. Gifted men and gospel ministers are not everywhere to be found : and we by dear-bought experience ought to know how to prize them. Assure yourselves that *we* think highly of the nature of our gift, and we hope you receive it as a considerable advantage.

“With reluctance, we dismiss Bro. John Deacon from us as a member and as a minister, and as such we recommend him to you : hoping and praying that it may be more to the glory of our kind God, more generally useful to precious souls, and more to the edification of the universal church of Christ, of which you, and we, are a part.

“May the blessing of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob rest upon you and your minister in life, in death and to eternity, is the earnest prayer of, dear friends,

“Yours in the pilgrimage to Mount Zion,

“On behalf of the church at Barton,

“SAML. DEACON, Junr.”

“24th August, 1783.”

The choice of the church proved a most happy one, and a remarkable change soon took place in the character of the services and the attendance of the congregation. When admitted to the New Connexion in the previous June the membership numbered 48, but by the end of the year 24 had been added to the church by baptism, the services were frequently crowded to excess, and it became absolutely necessary to increase the accommodation in the chapel. We accordingly find this undated resolution, probably passed in the early months of 1784 :—

*“Agreement of the Church and Trustees respecting the Rebuilding of the Meeting House.*

“Whereas our present Meeting House is now much too small to accommodate the congregation which generally attends there : we, the church and trustees, have thought it

advisable to rebuild it upon a larger and more commodious plan ; and have therefore universally agreed to put the same in execution, inasmuch as we are persuaded that it will be more for the advancement of religion in general, and our own interest in particular.

“Signed, JOHN DEACON, Minister.”

Also by 4 Deacons,  
4 Trustees,  
20 ‘Common Members.’

Negotiations were entered into for the purchase of additional property, and on April 14th messages, &c., were conveyed from the owner of the Queen’s Head for the sum of £310. Mr. Deacon appealed to many churches in the denomination for assistance, and travelled many miles for the purpose of collecting subscriptions. The sympathy with the minister and church in their effort was evidently very cordial and extensive, as the following fact testifies. In Adam Taylor’s “History of the General Baptists” we find this note respecting the Society at Church Lane, London :—

“When application was made to them for assistance in building the Meeting House at Leicester in the winter of 1783, more than £110 were easily collected.”

The work of rebuilding the chapel was commenced in 1784, and was completed in the early part of 1785. The purchase of property from the owner of the

Queen's Head enabled them to build nearer to the street, though the frontage was still occupied by a row of cottages.

Nicholls, in his "History of Leicester," written a few years later, says:—

"The Meeting House of the General Baptists is situate in Friar Lane, and has a respectable appearance without ; but it stands in a yard screened by buildings. The present minister is Mr. John Deacon. On a tablet on the outside—

'This edifice, appropriated to the public worship of Almighty God, and the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, was erected by the General Baptists, assisted by others of their Protestant brethren, M.D.C.C.L.X.X.X.V.'"

The new chapel was built, and the church in a thoroughly prosperous condition, before Mr. Deacon was ordained to the pastoral office. In 1786 the Association was held in Leicester, and the ordination service formed part of the programme of arrangements. The well-known Dan Taylor, as Mr. Deacon's former tutor, took the leading part in these services, which, according to our present-day notions, would be a weariness to the flesh. We are told "Mr. Taylor delivered an introductory discourse, proposed the questions to the people and minister, offered the ordination prayer, and delivered a long charge to the young pastor." This charge when printed occupied over eighty pages, and would probably take three



hours in delivery. It is rather astonishing to us what our ancestors *could* stand in the way of long discourses. At the same time this address by Mr. Taylor was evidently exhaustive and eloquent, and was regarded as being worthy to rank with the finest productions of the times.

The minute on the church books recording these proceedings is as follows:—

“Mr. John Deacon was ordained the elder and pastor of the General Baptist Church by the unanimous and universal consent and choice of the members. The ordination charge was delivered by the Rev. Mr. D. Taylor, and the sermon, or exhortation to the church, was preached by the Rev. Mr. Wm. Thompson, of Boston, Lincolnshire. N.B. The steps taken previous to the ordination were read by one of the members, and ordered to be printed with the sermons and the profession of faith.”

The number of members had increased to 75, and there was every indication of continued prosperity.

From 1786 to 1804 there are no records of any church proceedings; the minute book being entirely blank for eight years. We get, however, from other sources some indication of the progress that was being made. In 1790 the membership had increased from 75 to 111, and the chapel was well attended. The young minister, too, had risen into some importance in the denomination, for at the Wisbeach Association of 1791, “It was resolved that a new

hymn book should be published for the use of the Connexion; and Mr. J. Deacon was requested to make a collection of such hymns as he might think proper for the purpose. A committee was appointed to examine and decide upon their merit."\* This selection of hymns was adopted generally by the churches of the New Connexion, and was for many years known as "Deacon's Collection." A new edition was afterwards published in 1804, which contained 746 hymns.

In 1794 the membership dropped suddenly to 76. This was occasioned by the secession of a number of the members who had become dissatisfied, and who subsequently founded the Archdeacon Lane Church. It is significant that one of the earliest church minutes, ten years later, records a resolution supporting their admission into the Connexion as a separate church.

The reason for this secession is not apparent, but it was probably owing to personal antipathies against the minister.

The *General Baptist Magazine* for the fourth quarter of 1804 gives the following account:—

"The Seventh Leicestershire Conference was held at Hinckley, Oct. 24—11 ministers present."

\* "Memoir of Dan Taylor," p. 198.

“When assembled for business in the afternoon, a letter from the Church in Arch-Deacon Lane, Leicester, was read, requesting the ministers and representatives present, to lay their request to be admitted into the connection, before their respective Churches and take an answer to the next Association.”

In this year the annual gathering of the New Connexion had been held once more in Leicester; this town being a convenient centre for the churches that were grouped round it.

The following extract from the *Repository* is quaint and interesting :—

“The Ministers, Representatives, and other friends who may attend the *G. B. Annual Association at Leicester*, are requested to put up at the THREE CRANES, lately known by the name of the *Lion and Lamb Inn*; instead of the SARACEN’S HEAD, as mentioned in the Minutes of last year.”

The church at Archdeacon Lane was formally admitted into the Association in the following year, 1805, and soon became a prosperous and influential cause.

In connection with this may be quoted an interesting minute found in the proceedings of the Friar Lane Church. It runs as follows :—

“Jan. 19th, 1806, Mr. Stevenson to speak publicly every Wednesday evening, and his future labours to be reconsidered at the next Church Meeting.”

There is a further minute that his "expenses attending village preaching be paid."

In this way one of the most honoured ministers of the Denomination commenced his work. He afterwards became pastor of the Archdeacon Lane Church, and subsequently of the church at Loughborough, where he undertook the management and tutorship of the academy for the training of young ministers.

In the year 1804-5 there are several incidents mentioned in the Church Book which are worthy of notice. The first is the following resolution:—

"Agreed that the houses belonging to the Meeting be taken down next Spring, and that the tenants have notice to quit before next Lady Day."

The houses referred to were those occupying the street frontage, and the resolution was supplemented next Spring by the following minute:—

"Feb. 17th, 1805. It is agreed that Mr. W. Sykes and Mr. Thos. Stevenson shall have the materials of the old houses, and fill up the present cellar with soil, making the road ready for paving, and everything cleared away ready to begin to build a front wall, paying to the Church the sum of Ten Guineas, to be paid by the 25 April next, by which time the whole shall be cleared away."

By a further minute it was "agreed to have palisades about 4 feet high." The chapel was

thus thrown open to the street and emerged from the obscurity in which it had been hidden for over a hundred and fifty years.

That the church was alive to the necessity for systematic visitation of its members, is shown by the following minute:—

“24 Sep., 1805. A list of the members was made out according to their places of residence, dividing the Church into 4 districts, viz.—North-east, South-east, South-west, North-west, *making the high-cross the center.*

Agreed that a nomination of Persons shall be made to serve as Assistants to the Pastor in the Spiritual concerns of the Church, at least on trial, previous to their being chosen as elders. Bror. Deacon was desired to make the nomination.”

He nominated five—all chosen but one, who probably refused to stand.

The population of the town at this time did not much exceed seven or eight thousand, and was grouped principally on the north side of the chapel, so that the district for each visitor would be compact and well within his reach.

Another curious minute, and one which shows how vastly the conditions of employment have changed, is the following:—

“The Sexton’s wages being by himself thought inadequate to the work, it was agreed that he should in future have One pound per quarter, and find the following articles:—Brushes of every kind, Besoms, Mops, Soap, Sand, and Cloths.”

What the remuneration was previous to the amount mentioned there is no evidence to show.

In 1806 the continuity of Mr. Deacon's ministry was suddenly broken, and for three years he was separated from the pastorate of the church, and was not re-instated into the ministry until the year 1811.

On the removal of Mr. Deacon, the church applied to the Rev. Thos. Rogers, of Fleet, who declined the invitation to the pastorate; which necessitated a further choice on the part of the church. This choice fell ultimately on the Rev. Mr. Wood, of Hinckley; but at this time there was at least a nominal control over the settlement of ministers, held by the Conference. The matter was accordingly discussed at two successive Conferences held in August and November, and the decision come to on the latter date is embodied in the following minute of the Leicestershire Meeting held at Hugglescote:—

“The consideration of Mr. Wood's remove to Friar Lane Church was resumed from the last Conference, and twenty were in favour of the remove, none against it, seven neuters.”

But although Mr. Wood was the minister of the church, he probably had not been formally ordained; for it was not until April of the following year that he was allowed to administer the Sacrament—such

was the extreme narrowness of the early General Baptists. The resolution, copied from the Church Book, dealing with this matter, is as follows:—

“The Church unanimously agreed to invite Bror. Wood to administer the Ordinance of the Lord’s Supper regularly among us.”

Mr. Wood’s ministry was from the very nature of things only of a temporary character, for the hearts of the people were evidently turned towards Mr. Deacon; and as soon as circumstances permitted he was restored to the fellowship of the church.

On January 20th, 1811, we find he was “requested to preach when disengaged from Derby, and as far as possible to resume the pastoral office”—Mr. Wood generously resigning his position and receiving the thanks of the church for his ministerial labours amongst them.

## CHAPTER V.

## ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

IT is now necessary to go back for a few years to take in consecutive order some facts relating to the establishment of the Sunday School which has been connected with Friar Lane Church for a hundred years.

The first Sunday School movement in Leicester dates back to 1785, when meetings were held in the Corn Exchange, at which it was resolved to make a combined effort. As the result of these meetings *eleven* schools were opened in the town in one day, but from some cause the attempt was not successful. Subsequently a school was started in connection with St. Mary's Church, but as the children of Dissenters were refused admittance, it was resolved to establish one in connection with Friar Lane Church.

The rules for carrying on this school, and the methods adopted for the management of the children are exceedingly curious. It was probably in the year 1796 that the school was first opened, and the scholars were limited to 40.



The *General Baptist Magazine* for 1798 gives an account of a sermon preached on behalf of the Sunday School, by Mr. Prowitt, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, and states that the collection taken on that occasion amounted to £12 1s. 9d.—a remarkable sum at that date.

The oldest Minute Book giving a record of the “proceedings of the Teachers’ Meeting” is dated Oct. 30th, 1815, but previous to that there are several references in the Church Book which it may be well to give in detail :—

“April 20th, 1806, a Committee appointed to conduct the business of the Sunday School. This Committee to consist of the Officers of the Church, and the Teachers of the School. To meet on Tuesday evening at the Vestry the 29th inst. at 7 o’clock, and on the first Tuesday of every month.”

“March 16th, 1807. It having been resolved by the Church to take down the end walls of the Vestry, and to remove them to an exact line with the Meeting walls, and to build two Rooms over the Vestry for the purpose of School Rooms ; Have agreed with Mr. Sykes to take down the end walls, and erect the same again, and complete the Rooms in a workman-like manner for the sum of seventy pounds.”

This increased accommodation was inadequate to the growing requirements of the school. The applications for admission were both numerous and constant, and it was decided to increase the number of scholars to 70. It was accordingly “agreed to

allow the teachers of the Sunday School to occupy a part of the vestry as a school room."

The *General Baptist Repository* in a report of an assembly of Sunday School delegates, held on June 12th, 1810, gives the following amongst other resolutions :—

"To recommend to the notice of Teachers Lancaster's Improved Plan of Teaching to Read ; and to request Mr. F. Deacon to publish the plan adopted in the Friar Lane Sunday School, Leicester."\*

The Mr. Deacon referred to in this quotation was the eldest son of the pastor of the church. He was an indefatigable worker in the Sunday School movement, and for many years previous to his removal to Quorndon was the leading spirit in connection with the school at Friar Lane.

Some statistics given in the *General Baptist Repository* for May, 1812, may be of interest :—

"Return of scholars, etc., made to the Sixth Assembly of Trustees for the G. B. Sunday Schools in the Midland Counties :—

<i>Friar Lane</i> —Scholars	-	-	-	145
Teachers	-	-	-	14
Assistants	-	-	-	14
Admitted	-	-	-	54
Hon'bly Dismissed	-	-	-	11
Withdrawn	-	-	-	57
Expelled	-	-	-	6."

\* This was subsequently published by Wilkins, of Derby, at 4d.

The conditions under which the teachers were admitted to the school would be found burdensome, if not intolerant, in these days. Not only did they have to take the management of unruly children, whose conduct was far worse in school than would be tolerated now, but fines were rigidly enforced for non-attendance, as the following resolutions will show :—

“That in future no persons proposed for teachers be admitted as such till they had been on trial three months ; at the expiration of which time their admission or non-admission be decided.”

“That a forfeit of one penny be paid by every teacher not in school before the last name on the list of teachers is called over, and that a forfeit of two pence be paid by every one absent from school ; *illness alone* excepted.

The superintendents must be in school to call over the names precisely at the time, or forfeit one penny.”

The purpose to which these forfeits were applied was the support of a much-needed library. Books were scarce and beyond the reach of ordinary people, but the lack of them was evidently strongly felt by the teachers. Accordingly we find the following resolutions passed in 1815 :—

“1.—That a library be established for the sole use of the teachers, and that a weekly subscription be immediately entered into for its support.

2.—That the forfeits paid by the teachers be henceforth given to the funds of the library.”

This library, some eight years after, was thrown open for the use of the children as well as the teachers, and the good conduct tickets, which had a monetary value, made the children eligible to use a certain number of books. The teachers' forfeits were then applied to the augmentation of a sick fund which had been established in connection with the school.

The rules relating to the admission of children and the discipline of the school belong equally to an epoch that has long passed away.

In the first place it was regarded as a privilege to be accepted as a scholar. In 1815 the age of admission was limited to fourteen years, no child older than this being accepted, unless under exceptional circumstances.

One of the main objects in these early schools was instruction in the three R.'s, this being the only opportunity the majority of children had of acquiring the rudiments of an education. No child was accordingly admitted into the school who was capable of reading in the fifth class, and unless they could attend regularly they were excluded, in order that children who could attend might not be prevented from receiving the full benefits of the school.

The punishments enforced were of a somewhat drastic nature, and some of them are remembered by persons now living. Detentions after the hours

of school were of weekly occurrence, and when these did not suffice, the log and shackles were called into requisition. The former consisted of a block of oak, divided into two parts, in the middle of which was a hole large enough for the insertion of the child's ankle. Hinges were fixed on the back, and it was secured on the front with a padlock. The block was sufficiently heavy to prevent the boy from moving about except with difficulty.

The shackles consisted of iron loops passed round the ankles. These loops had holes in the back through which a long iron bar was run. Four or five children could in this way be secured at the same time. This method of punishment was more irksome than painful, though, if worn for any considerable time, either of these modified "instruments of torture" were liable to cause considerable suffering. It was no uncommon occurrence for children to be detained in school for hours after the regular time for closing.

The possibility of governing the children by the exercise merely of moral influence does not appear to have been entertained; and the rewards for good conduct were little less objectionable than the methods of punishment.

A system of giving tickets for good behaviour and proficiency was established at a very early date,

and a fixed value of *fourpence* per dozen, which was reduced to *threepence* and afterwards *twopence* per dozen (in 1819), enabled the children to purchase articles of a very miscellaneous description. A sort of small fancy fair was set up in the school where boys could purchase toys of a harmless nature and girls could buy strings of beads and other ornaments for personal adornment.

On December 15th, 1817, this system was modified, as is shown by the following extract from the minutes' of the Teachers' Meeting :—

“1.—Resolved, that the children shall not be permitted to purchase any article with their tickets except *books*, unless it be by the particular recommendation of their teacher.”

A later minute still further modifies the power of purchase. It reads :—

“Dec. 18, 1821. That in future the children shall learn Watts' Catechism, which they shall be required to purchase with their tickets.”

The teachers' library was at this time thrown open for the use of such children as were recommended by their teachers, and a subscription of two tickets per fortnight or the payment of a halfpenny in money was required.

As previously stated, a regular attendance was insisted on, the teachers placing absolute power in the

hands of those who had charge of the school, as the following minute shows :—

“Resolved, that the superintendents have the power to cross out the names of those children that come eight times too late, or are absent four times in the quarter.”

One of the most curious items to be found in the School Records, and one which shows how greatly our ideas of the fitness of things have changed, is the following account which we abstract as it stands :—

“The expense of giving the children’s treat on the Race Wednesday and Thursday in 1826 :—

Buns	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	0
Fruit	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	12	6
Ale	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0	0
Beer	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	11	8
							<hr/>		
							6	6	2
Extra Buns	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	2	0
							<hr/>		
							6	8	2”

We can imagine the consternation that would be created in any school in the present day, were a proposal made to regale the children on *ale* and *beer* !

From the very first the Friar Lane School was, in point of numbers, a decided success. The schools that were enlarged in 1807 soon became utterly inadequate for the accommodation of children who applied for admission, and various expedients were adopted to overcome the difficulty.

In 1823 a branch school was started in Woodgate for the convenience of children living in that district. This school did not contain more than fifty children, and the strict economy that had to be exercised in the provision of books is shown by the grant made to this branch :—

“June 23, 1823. Resolved that the following Books be given to Thos. Stanford for the use of the Woodgate School, viz. :—

6 of the first part of the Union Spelling Book.

6 of the 3rd part                      do.                      do.

3 of the Spelling Book.

2 Testaments.

½ doz. each of the 1st and 2nd parts of Watts' Catechism.”

For some reason which does not appear, this effort was not of long continuance, for on the 29th of August, 1825, this minute is recorded :—

“Resolved by the majority of the teachers that the Woodgate School be given up, and that the parents be permitted the privilege of sending their children to the Friar Lane School.”

Possibly it was found that Woodgate was too far away from the Central School to be worked efficiently. It was certainly not from any decline in enthusiasm, or decrease in the number of applicants, for in the same month of August, 1825, a room was taken in Staynes' Yard, High Street, and “it was agreed that 60 children with their teachers



be sent to the new room next Lord's Day morning." Subsequently this branch was removed to Free School Lane, and continued there until the erection of the new schools in Oxford Street, in 1828.

The number of scholars at this time in the Central School is stated to have been over 400, and a band of 40 devoted teachers gave a considerable amount of time to their instruction.

A Sunday School teacher's work in those days was no dilettante occupation; the very conditions under which they worked in the close atmosphere of crowded rooms, combined with the efforts to control turbulent children, entailing a considerable amount of physical weariness.

An account of an attempt on the part of the Friar Lane teachers to establish a Sunday School Union for the town and district may fitly close this chapter. How far the effort was successful we are unable to judge. But we give the minute as it stands:—

“Extra Teachers' Meeting, July 30, 1823.

Resolved, 1st.—That the teachers of the Friar Lane and Wood Gate Sunday School form themselves into a Union.

2nd.—If any school in the town or neighbourhood think well to agree with the regulations of this Union, they will be accepted.

3rd.—Resolved that the first meeting of this Union be held on Thursday, the 18th of September, 1823.

4th.—Resolved that the meeting for discussion takes place at 9 o'clock precisely on the morning of the 18th of Sept., 1823, and close at 11 o'clock.

5th.—That the address to the teachers be delivered at the close of the discussion.

6th.—That tea be taken between dinner and supper.

7th.—That a committee of nine be formed from the two schools present and 5 be competent to act."

We must now leave the History of the School until a later chapter, and proceed with the continuation of the Church Records.

## CHAPTER VI.

## CONTINUATION OF MR. DEACON'S MINISTRY.

THE re-instatement of Mr. Deacon as minister was the signal for increased activity on the part of the church.

The number of members at this date is shown by the Church Roll to have been 95, though in Wood's history the figures given are 130. This membership steadily increased, until eight years after, when it reached nearly 200.

A forward movement was made by the church in 1811 by the establishment of the cause at Billesdon; and it may be as well to give here all the facts ascertainable respecting this branch.

The preaching was so far successful that it was agreed to "raise subscriptions for building a chapel," and for this object Mr. Deacon travelled in many parts of the country, and collected a considerable portion of the money needed.

A year later the number of hearers had increased to such an extent that Mr. Austin was engaged as Minister for the Billesdon Church, and for several years continued his work there.

The prejudice against Dissenters, or as they were derisively called "Ranters," was very strong in many country places; and the little church at Billesdon was subjected to considerable annoyance from bands of roughs, who disturbed the services, and several times damaged the Meeting House.

The London Committee for the protection of Dissenters was accordingly appealed to; and in 1814 four persons were prosecuted for "repeatedly disturbing the congregation." This secured immunity from further annoyance.

In the same year there is a note in the Rev. Dan Taylor's Memoirs to this effect:—

"He preached on Thursday in Leicester. The ensuing Lord's Day he was engaged twice at Leicester and once at Billesdon."

This meant that he must walk nine miles after the afternoon service at Friar Lane, and probably travel the same distance home at night.

This church gradually became in a condition to support itself, and carry on its own work. It was accordingly resolved on May 11th, 1819, "to recommend the friends at Billesdon to be formed into a separate church." This resolution was carried into effect, and 41 names were transferred from the Friar Lane Roll.

The few years following 1812 present no special features in the work of the church at Leicester, but there is one item we extract from the *General Baptist Repository* which has a significance of its own, and shows that the church was fully alive to the necessity for spreading the gospel:—

“Leicestershire Conference held at Derby, Sep. 28-9, 1813.

The following question was proposed from Friar Lane, Leicester: ‘Ought not the G. B.’s to exert themselves as much as they can in establishing, tho’ on ever so small a scale, a mission of their own?’ Answer—‘Yes.’”

This, so far as we can ascertain, was the first step taken towards the formation of the “General Baptist Missionary Society,” which did such good and useful work in Orissa.

The door of the chapel at this time opened direct into the chapel yard, and this was found so objectionable that it was decided to spend £13 10s. in providing an inner door—much to the convenience of the worshippers.

There are several minutes about this period that will be found interesting:—

“Nov. 25th, 1816. It is the decided opinion of the Church that it is not consistent with Christianity to attend Play-houses, or to assemble at Public-houses with the Hampden Clubs.”

In March, 1817, the church made a protest which shows they were firmly wedded to the principle of individual liberty. It took this form:—

“Protest against the Association interfering with the independence of the churches as to the reception, retention, or expulsion of any of its members. The churches ought to be jealous of their independence, and resist firmly every attempt to weaken or destroy it.”

It was further resolved:—

“To present our remonstrance against the rule of the last Association concerning the expulsion of churches or individuals for supposed heretical sentiments.”

The church at that time suffered from a disorder which has been transmitted to succeeding generations, and is very prevalent in the present day. Whether the remedy then adopted would be efficacious now is uncertain. It would, at least, not be very warmly welcomed:—

“A complaint being made by the Pastor respecting the members and hearers coming into public worship after the service has begun, it was agreed that the members be exhorted to attend in time. . . . . It was further agreed that some suitable tracts be distributed among those who are habitually late at worship!”

We now come to the crowning effort of Mr. Deacon's ministry — the partial re-building and enlargement of the Chapel for the second time

during his 30 years pastorate. The accommodation had been getting quite inadequate, and it was accordingly resolved in April of 1818 to provide sittings for over a thousand persons. The estimated cost was at first £950, but by the time the building was completely finished and fitted, the actual amount expended had run up to £1412 5s. 6d.

At the outset of this gigantic undertaking, promises to the amount of £440 had been made—the greater part of which were to be weekly donations from the members.

The new building was completed and opened on Wednesday, October 14th, 1818. The Rev. J. A. James preached in the morning from the text—“Sanctify them through Thy truth”; and the Rev. Josiah Birt, of Birmingham, in the evening, from the text—“In whom ye also are builded together, for a habitation of God and the Spirit.”

The Church Minutes record that:—

“Above 20 ministers of different denominations attended on the occasion, and most of them dined at the Blue Boar, and spent the afternoon in the most agreeable manner.”

A quotation from the *General Baptist Repository* gives an interesting account of this spirited undertaking:—

“On Wednesday, Oct. 14th, 1818, the Meeting House in Friar Lane, Leicester, was re-opened for public worship, after

having been considerably enlarged. Its original interior dimensions were forty-two feet by thirty-six, and contained a gallery in front of five seats deep and three on the sides. It is now seventy feet and a half by thirty-six, and contains a gallery of nine seats deep in front, three on each side, and five behind the pulpit, and will conveniently seat *one thousand and twenty-two persons*. . . . . Collections were made at the close of each service, the amount of which was fifty pounds twelve shillings. . . . . It is but just to observe that the members of the church and the regular hearers have exerted themselves on this occasion beyond what is common, or what could be expected considering their general circumstances. About *four hundred pounds* had been previously subscribed by themselves, and continued exertions are resolved upon for liquidation of the debt."

There are several additional church resolutions, the insignificance of which makes them quaint:—

"Agreed to purchase *lamps* to light the Chapel when finished,"—

the previous mode of illumination having been by candles. And again:—

"Agreed to have a lamp in front of the Chapel."

The seats behind the pulpit in the gallery were occupied by the choir; musical instruments of various kinds being called into requisition to augment the singing. At each side of the pulpit was a gallery rising from the floor, and extending to the wall behind; this being used as seats for the children.



A somewhat startling innovation was adopted in connection with the new Chapel, which shows that our ancestors were ahead of their time—the plan of *Voluntary Offerings* being decided on. It did not, however, meet the anticipations of its promoters and after a short time had to be abandoned. The resolution dealing with the matter is as follows:—

“August 31, 1818. Agreed that the seats [in the enlarged chapel] should not be let on hire, but those persons who wished to attend and contribute to the support of the ministry, shall do what they are supposed to contribute by *voluntary subscription*.”

The morbid interest excited on the occasion of a funeral sermon was far more intense formerly than it is at the present day; but we have a record of an instance of this kind which is unexampled in the history of this church, and shows how deeply respected the lady must have been on the occasion of whose death it was preached. We take the extract from the *General Baptist Repository*:—

“October 28th, 1818. Died, aged twenty-eight, Mrs. Lucy Deacon, wife of Mr. Fredk. Deacon, of Leicester.”

The Rev. Robert Hall “at the particular solicitation of the whole family, preached a funeral sermon on the Lord’s Day evening, Nov. 8, from ‘To die is gain.’ The interest excited at this time was beyond all former example in this town, in reference to any private character, in the memory of the oldest person living. Almost an hour before the commencement of

worship the Meeting House was nearly filled ; and such was the pressure of people of all denominations to gain admittance, that it created the most serious alarm. Above *two thousand* persons were crowded within the walls, the seats being generally filled double, and every spot of room was completely occupied. Some hundreds waited about the doors ; and the street to a considerable extent was blocked up. More than a thousand people, it is believed, could not gain admittance even in the chapel yard, and of course were obliged to retire without hearing a word of the sermon, which was peculiarly expressive and pathetic, and admirably adapted to the character of the deceased and the state of the audience."

In the following year the first anniversary of the new Chapel was held, and from the account of the same it will be seen that the church was making strenuous efforts to reduce the debt which they felt to be particularly burdensome :—

"On Lord's Day, Oct. 10, 1819, was held the anniversary of the re-opening of Friar Lane Meeting House, Leicester. . . . £34 were collected at the doors, which raises the sum already subscribed by the church and congregation to £666. About £760 remains to be discharged, which it is intended to raise by periodical subscriptions, etc."

A report to the Annual Church Meeting, held in December of the next year, states that the debt had been reduced to £562 ; so that in less than three years the congregation had raised and contributed, mainly by their own efforts, nearly £900. This, it must be remembered, was in addition to the aid rendered to the Billesdon church. The

membership at this time was under 200, so that the amount of energy displayed must have been very considerable.

The discipline exercised by the church over its members was exceedingly strict, though it is doubtful whether the curtailment of personal liberty effected to any considerable extent the object it was intended to achieve. We have seen that the attendance at theatrical performances was prohibited, and on September the 23rd, 1819, the church

“Agreed that if any of our members attend the Races in future, such conduct shall be considered sufficient to exclude them, and it is determined that any such character shall be disowned without delay.”

A great number of exclusions for this and theatre-going took place in the following years, and it was not until eighteen years later that the church decided “that the law relative to the exclusion of members for going to the races be erased.”

The close of Mr. Deacon's eventful life was now fast approaching; the great exertions which he had imposed on his vigorous constitution having tended to undermine his strength. Very soon after the re-opening of the chapel it became apparent that his power was failing, although for several years he continued preaching three times on the

Sunday, and once in the week, in addition to frequent visits to the village churches. The collapse was rapidly startling, as is evidenced by two Church Minutes passed in the month of January, 1821 :—

“Ordered that in consequence of the ill state of our Pastor’s health, Mr. Beamish be requested to preach and baptise.”

The next minute shows a touching solicitude on the part of the people for the man who had rendered such great services, and had made so many sacrifices for his Church :—

“Agreed that our pastor be requested to omit the evening service on the Lord’s Day at such times as he feels necessary on account of his health, as the church does not desire him to labour beyond his strength.”

Mr. Deacon, however, did not long need to avail himself of this curtailment of his work, for it was very soon the duty of the Church Secretary to record his death. On March 10th, 1821, we find this minute entered in the Church Book. The very brevity of the entry tells of the suppressed emotion which dispensed with the conventional phrases so common to the time, and could but barely record the mournful fact :—

“On this day, after a severely long and painful affliction, our beloved pastor, John Deacon, departed this life, sincerely and deeply regretted by the whole church and congregation.”

The *General Baptist Repository*, commenting on his death says:—

“The last Sabbath he was out, he preached a sermon in aid of the Framework Knitters’ Fund; and though evidently suffering severely from pain, he delivered a feeling and warm address with his accustomed animation and energy.”

“On March 25th his funeral sermon was preached by Mr. W. Pickering, from Heb. xiii., 1: ‘Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,’ when the chapel was crowded to excess, and vast numbers, it is supposed some thousands, went away disappointed: a proof of the high estimation in which he was held by his neighbours and friends.”

“The great Head of the Church appears to have blessed the latter days of His servant in a peculiar manner, by making his increasing labours eminently useful; not only to his own people, but wherever he went, as many neighbouring churches can testify.”

He was buried in the Friar Lane Chapel, the Rev. Robert Hall conducting the funeral service.

A Monument to his memory was shortly afterwards erected, and still occupies a prominent position on the north wall of the chapel, to the left of the pulpit. The £50 required for this purpose was collected in a few hours by his successor to the pastorate; and the inscription was written by the Rev. Robert Hall, between whom and Mr. Deacon a strong friendship existed.

It reads as follows :—

SACRED  
TO THE MEMORY OF  
THE REV. JOHN DEACON,  
THIRTY-FOUR YEARS PASTOR OF THIS CONGREGATION ;  
WHOSE ENERGY OF CHARACTER,  
AND ZEAL FOR THE INTERESTS OF RELIGION,  
ENABLED HIM (WITH THE BLESSING OF GOD)  
TO RAISE THIS EDIFICE FROM ITS BASIS,  
AND THIS CHURCH FROM A VERY LOW  
TO ITS PRESENT FLOURISHING CONDITION.

. . . . .  
AFTER A LONG AND SEVERE ILLNESS,  
SUSTAINED WITH EXEMPLARY PATIENCE,  
HE EXCHANGED HIS MORTAL TABERNACLE  
FOR "A HOUSE NOT MADE WITH HANDS,"  
ON THE 10TH OF MARCH, 1821,  
AGED 64 YEARS.

Mr. Deacon belonged to a type of men whose existence disappeared with the forms and traditions of the early part of the century. The amount of work accomplished by these men and the self-sacrifice their position demanded, seem almost incredible, and have long been rendered impossible by the conditions of our present-day life.

Three times preaching on the Sunday, and the frequent inordinate length of the sermons must have been a severe tax. When it is remembered, too, that long journeys had to be travelled on foot to the neighbouring villages and towns in all kinds

of weather, and that considerable opposition and contumely had to be encountered, it is easily seen that a pastor's work in those days was no sinecure. It frequently happened, too, that the income derived from the pastorate was not sufficient to support his family, and that it consequently had to be augmented by some secular occupation.

Still the conviction of the high nature of his calling, and the enthusiasm felt for his work, made the man oblivious to all personal discomfort and inconvenience. Such was the type of men to which Mr. Deacon belonged. An old portrait preserved by the church shows a face of considerable refinement and intellectual power. The features are clearly cut, the forehead high, and the eyes deep-set and expressive—the face of a man evidently of no common order.

His work in the church proved that he was capable of considerable exertion on its behalf. His ministry commenced with a church-membership of 48, and notwithstanding a great number of removals and several secessions, it had been raised at the time of his death to over 200.

His loss was not only felt by the church at Friar Lane, but he had acquired so prominent a position in the Denomination to which he belonged that his death was deeply and widely regretted.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE REV. SAMUEL WIGG.

THE choice of a successor to Mr. Deacon in the pastorate of the church was by no means an easy task, and proved in this case, as in so many others, the rock on which free churches so frequently split.

Mr. Wigg, of Norwich, had preached several times towards the close of Mr. Deacon's ministry, and was regarded with considerable favour by a large number of the members. In the opinion of a number of others, Mr. Wigg had one disqualification, viz., that although a man of considerable culture, he had not received any orthodox training for the ministry, and to persons of narrow sympathies there was only this one means of admittance to the pastoral office. The probability is that Mr. Wigg was too advanced to secure anything like unanimous election, and consequently the church was for many years in a state of unrest—factions contending with each other, and considerably hindering the success of the work.



At the commencement of his ministry, in June, 1821, when he was invited to spend "twelve months on probation," he was only 24 years old, and a considerable number in the Church resented the idea of so young a man having the sole charge of the pastorate, notwithstanding his undoubted ability.

He was appointed as permanent Pastor in July, 1822, the vote of the Church Meeting being 121 in his favour and 42 against. Although the congregations began to improve rapidly under his preaching, the prejudice excited against him at first did not seem to diminish, and in two years the Church Book contains the names of 36 persons who resigned and formed the cause at Dover Street.

The separation took place in June, and in November they were constituted a distinct Church. A small chapel was quickly erected and opened in March of the following year by the Rev. Robert Hall.

This unfortunate separation was the cause of much bitterness, not only amongst the friends at Leicester, for it influenced their relationship with other churches. The dispute was referred to the Midland Conference, in reference to which there is the following minute:—

"May 7, 1823. Refused to acknowledge right of Hinckley Conference to discuss internal affairs of the church—namely, the withdrawal of members and the expulsion of 11 others."

Two years after the Minute Book shows a further development of the dispute :—

“ March 20th, 1826. Special Church Meeting. Resolved unanimously to withdraw from the Midland Conference on account of the action the Conference took in reference to ‘our unhappy case,’ and because they would never sacrifice the great principles of liberty.”

“ May 29th, 1826. The letter was read and ordered to be sent to the Association, containing the determination of the church to withdraw from the Connexion.”

Fortunately, the extreme measure indicated in the last minute was not carried into effect — wiser counsels prevailing, but for several years the church severed its connection with the Midland Conference.

Gradually, however, the bitterness subsided, the Friar Lane church agreed to give £100 towards the cost of the Dover Street Chapel, and cordial relationships were established between the two churches.

Notwithstanding these dissensions, the work under the new Pastor gave most encouraging indications of success. In the Report to the Association for 1823 the following passage occurs :—

“ The labours of our beloved minister have been attended with more than usual success. Many have been converted, and many more are enquiring their way to Zion. Our congregations are large and increasing in respectability ; prayer meetings well attended, and as a church, we are peaceable, united and happy. Our Sunday School is much increased and doing well.”

The number of members at this date was 192, but in the following year (1824) the membership had increased to 230, thirty-eight having been admitted into the church during the year. The Report to the Association states "Our congregation continues large, and the labours of our beloved minister are crowned with success."

In the first four years of Mr. Wiggs' ministry 127 persons were received into the church by baptism alone.

About this time (1823) a cause had been started in Woodgate, and in 1824 it was created a distinct branch of the Church. The information respecting it is however very scanty, and from some cause or other it had shortly afterwards to be given up.

Another forward movement seems to have animated the members of the church, as is evidenced by the Reports to the Association, etc. :—

"We have added to our number this year thirty-six by baptism, and have now fifteen candidates standing, some of whom are at Wigstow, a populous place in which we endeavoured about a year ago to establish the cause." \*

The following is an extract from the Church Minutes the same year :—

"Nov. 29, 1826. That the brethren living at Houghton-on-the-Hill be received into this church."

\* Report to Association, 1826.

There are two other Reports to the Association bearing on these same branches:—

[1827]. “Our cause is steadily and progressively advancing in Wigstoun. We have also commenced preaching at two other villages, Houghton and Thrummason, and we hope with some success.”

[1828]. “At Houghton the Lord is doing great things for us whereof we are glad. We have lately baptised four from that place, and have eight more waiting for baptism, besides several who are enquiring the way to Zion. At Wigstoun we hope the cause is progressively advancing.”

These two branches were maintained for some years. There is no record when the one at Wigstoun was discontinued, but in 1838 it was found impossible to maintain the Houghton branch. The distance was so great that during the winter months it was utterly impossible to provide the pulpit with supplies, as the severe weather frequently for weeks together prevented anyone from walking there and back. On Dec. 25th of that year the following resolution was accordingly passed: “That the Houghton Chapel be offered to the Primitive Methodists for £100.”

Returning to the Chronological Record of the Church we find a quaint minute, which revives memories respecting the musical arrangements of former years:—

“1825, Aug. 22. That Bro. Smith take such steps as he may deem the most effectual to raise among the members and hearers a sufficient sum to purchase the bass viol. Price £10 10s. od.”

There are several other extracts, which are of considerable interest :—

“Nov. 14, 1825. Brethren Botterill, Scott, Caldicott and Wright, appointed *Elders*.

- 1.—To assist the minister, look after and visit absentees from the public worship, and especially from the Lord’s table.
- 2.—To visit the sick, and inform the minister of such persons.”

“Jan. 9, 1826. That Brethren Cartwright and Illston be requested to sit on the back seats on the front gallery for one month, on account of the congregation being disturbed by disorderly boys.”

“May 8, 1827. Three additional deacons elected :—

Samuel Wright -	-	-	-	78 votes.
R. Senior -	-	-	-	50 votes.
J. Harrison -	-	-	-	42 votes.”

“Dec. 10th, 1827. It was unanimously agreed that the chapel be lighted with gas.”

“Jan. 28, 1828. That a meeting take place on Thursday night, at eight o’clock, to adopt plans to obtain subscriptions towards defraying the expense incurred in lighting the meeting with gas.”

Although Mr. Wigg was appointed Pastor of the church in 1821, the prejudice against ordaining a young man to the pastoral office was so great that it was not until seven years after, that the formal ordination service took place, of which the *General*

*Baptist Repository* for October, 1828, gives the following account:—

“ORDINATION.—On Wednesday, Sep. 10, 1828, Mr. S. Wigg was ordained to the pastoral office over the G. B. church, *Friar Lane, Leicester*. Mr. Goadby read the scriptures and prayed. Mr. Rogers delivered the introductory discourse. Mr. Jarrom offered up the ordination prayer, with the laying on of hands; and delivered an impressive charge to the minister, from a ‘Good minister of Jesus Christ.’ Mr. Burdett concluded with prayer. In the evening, Mr. Rogers preached an appropriate and excellent sermon to the people. Mr. Butler gave out the hymns the whole of the day. May this union be blest from above!”

The records of the next few years contain few items that are of any interest.

In 1830 a thorough revision of the roll of church members was undertaken, and as a consequence 70 names were erased and an accurate return was made to the Association. This, in spite of 68 additions during two years, reduced the number of members from about 380 to 309.

The decade following 1830 was one of great trial to the churches of Leicester and neighbourhood. Although the number of members was fairly well maintained—averaging about 325—and the congregations were large and appreciative, financial difficulties sorely hampered the efforts of both minister and members. Year after year resulted in

a deficiency of revenue, and the heavy debt on the chapel was a source of great trouble and inconvenience. The industrial depression of the time made it impossible for many of the members to contribute towards the cause—a Government Return showing that the average earnings of the framework knitters in the hosiery trade (then the staple industry of the town) were only 8/- per week. This depression necessarily crippled the efforts of the church and made any financial success an impossibility.

Towards the year 1840, however, the prospect began to brighten.

In the meantime there are several minutes of the the church worthy of preservation:—

“July 21, 1834. The church agreed to celebrate the 1st Aug., it being the day for the emancipation of the West India slaves.”

“July 11, 1837. A committee appointed to consider the case of those members who cannot read, and draw up a plan of instruction.”

What the plan of instruction was we have no means of ascertaining. The Friar Lane Church seems to have always been alive to the necessity of meeting the educational requirements of its members, and the children connected with the place, and by the establishment of night classes

and other means of instruction, has often supplied a pressing want :—

“Aug. 7, 1837. That the chapel be licensed for the celebration of marriages.”

“That a collection be made for defraying the expense.”

“Dec. 25, 1837. First marriage celebrated in the chapel.”

“ANNIVERSARY SERMONS.—On Lord’s Day, Sept. 9th, 1838, sermons were preached at Friar Lane Chapel, Leicester, by Rev. J. Burns, of London, and Rev. G. Cosens, of Cradeley. When upwards of £17 were collected towards the liquidation of the debt on the chapel. On Wednesday afternoon, about 300 friends partook of tea, and were addressed by Messrs. Wigg, Cosens, Tyers, &c. The proceeds of the tea, &c., augmented the contributions for the chapel to £30.”\*

“Jan. 21, 1839. That there be three family pews made at the bottom of the chapel.”

The following extract from the *General Baptist Repository* of 1839 may be of interest, as showing the enthusiasm which prevailed at many of the religious services of the day :—

“BAPTISM AT FRIAR LANE CHAPEL, LEICESTER.—On Lord’s Day, May 5th, the services were commenced at seven o’clock in the morning, when a number of friends assembled to implore the divine presence through the services of the day. Public worship commenced at the usual time, when the spacious chapel was crowded in every part, and our esteemed pastor delivered a most impressive discourse, from 1 Chron. xxix. 5, ‘And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?’ after which, fourteen persons received the ordinance of believer’s baptism. In the afternoon, the church

\* *G. B. Repository*, 1838.



met to commemorate the dying love of a crucified Redeemer, when the newly baptized persons were received into the church by the pastor giving them the right hand of fellowship. In the evening, a most appropriate discourse was delivered by our minister, from Luke xv. 23 ; and at the close of the services a public prayer-meeting was held. A good feeling pervaded the whole of the services. May many such days be experienced, not only by us, but by all the churches of the Redeemer.—S.W.”

A further reference shows that in September of the same year 15 persons were baptised on one day.

The membership of the Church had now reached 401, and a thorough re-awakening of interest appears to have taken place. Preaching was commenced in the Oxford Street schoolroom—revival services, full of spiritual earnestness and power, were held in the chapel ; and as a result of this religious zeal, a determination was arrived at by the members to free from debt the place in which they worshipped. This result they hoped to achieve at the anniversary services of 1840, and the following extract from the *General Baptist Repository* of that year will show the state of enthusiasm which the occasion produced. The tea was held in the chapel, the pews of which were boarded over for the occasion, and the excitement was of such an intense nature that those now living who were present vividly remember the details of the meeting :—

“FRIAR LANE CHAPEL, LEICESTER. *The last Anniversary.*  
—The spirited conduct of the friends in this place, in entirely

liquidating the debt on their chapel, is not only deserving of record, but of imitation. Their debt was of long standing; but, by a series of zealous efforts, it was reduced, in the Autumn of 1839, to £250. At that meeting it was resolved, if possible, to discharge the whole in the course of twelve months; and pledges were given by a number of the friends and members, that they would collect or contribute, previous to the anniversary of 1840, the sum of £140. This was regarded as a good beginning, though the amount promised was considerably below the existing debt. The trade of the town suffered an unprecedented depression in the course of the year, and it was feared that the pledges of many of the friends, who are not generally in affluent circumstances, would not, and could not be redeemed; and consequently the return of the season was looked for with apprehension, rather than confidence. The time arrived. Two appropriate sermons were delivered on Lord's Day, Sept. 6th, by the Rev. J. Burns, of London, after which £20 were collected. A tea-meeting was held on the Wednesday evening following, when seven or eight hundred persons, belonging to the church and congregation, and also to other churches in the town, were assembled. The tea was provided gratuitously, and the proceeds amounting to £36 12s., were appropriated to the debt. Afterwards, on the names of the pledged parties being called over, it was discovered, to the surprise and delight of all present, that while only two of the promises had failed, the great majority of the friends had realised, and contributed much more than they had promised; so that upwards of £190 were laid on the table. Still there was a deficiency, and a collection was then engaged in, to make up the whole amount of the debt. This was a moment of great excitement, and some fear; but the determination to wipe off the debt entirely, and for ever, was so strong, that including the £20 collected on the Lord's Day, the whole sum obtained was at length £280! The meeting was addressed by Messrs. Burns, Goadby, Stevenson, Finn, Tyers, and Wigg, in a manner that evinced the liveliest interest

in the very happy issue of this united and simultaneous effort. Several friends of other denominations rendered assistance to this effort, and appeared to act on the well-known principle of helping those who help themselves. Debts are heavy drawbacks on the interests of religion; and, to a certain extent, are discreditable where they are allowed to remain. They crush the minister, and dispirit the people. Would that every church resolved, in proportion to its ability, to imitate the praiseworthy example of the friends in Friar Lane! Of how many chapels might it soon be said, they are free, and are entirely consecrated to the service and glory of the Most High!"

Having cleared off the debt, the church immediately and heroically determined to incur a fresh liability by thoroughly renovating the chapel.

The following quotation from the *Repository* gives the details of this new undertaking, and further exhibits the enterprising spirit which prevailed in the church:—

"RE-OPENING OF FRIAR LANE CHAPEL, LEICESTER.—The friends meeting in this place of worship, having last September [1840] removed the remaining part of the incubus (amounting to £250) which had so long paralyzed all their efforts, then pledged themselves, that their chapel, which for the last two or three years had been suffered to remain in a state neither creditable nor safe, should be thoroughly cleaned, repaired, and beautified. Accordingly, it was closed for this purpose on Lord's Day, April 4th, and has since, in accordance with that pledge, undergone a complete repair. The fronts of the galleries have been taken down and modernized, the pews in the body of the chapel, which were in a very dilapidated and dangerous state, taken up and relaid, &c. These alterations have been effected at an expense of upwards of £200. On Lord's Day, May 9th, the chapel was re-opened, when two

sermons were preached by the minister of the place. The collections and subscriptions during the day, amounted to the very handsome sum of £50 1s. 10d. The friends also intend having two sermons and a tea meeting next September, it being the anniversary of the liquidation of our debt; when, judging from the cheerful liberality of our friends on this, and former occasions, and relying on the efficiency of the *voluntary principle*, we have not the shadow of a doubt that the remainder of the amount will be willingly contributed.—S.H.W.”

The church was also alive to the social and political necessities of the country, as is shown by a resolution passed in 1841, “to petition Parliament for a total Repeal of the Corn Laws.”

In the year 1842 the membership had risen to 484, sixty-eight having been baptised during the twelve months.

The next year the Pastor suffered two severe bereavements—the first his wife, and the second his son, Samuel W. Wigg. The latter was a young man of very great promise, and was an active worker both in the Church and Sunday School. The following extract shows the appreciation of his services:—

“THE TEACHERS of the Baptist Sabbath School, Friar Lane, Leicester, have just erected a very neat tablet to the memory of one of their fellow-labourers, bearing the following inscription:—‘Sacred to the memory of Samuel Welham Wigg, second son of the Rev. Samuel Wigg, pastor of this church. He died the 28th October, 1842, in the 19th year of his age. His end was peace. This tablet was erected by the teachers of the Sabbath School, in affectionate remembrance of their highly esteemed friend and fellow-labourer.’”

On June 12th, 1843, Glenfield was adopted as a branch of the church for six months, the members helping by these continual efforts to assist the neighbouring villages in establishing new churches. It was on the 10th of April, in this year, too, that it was resolved to hold, on the first Monday in the month, a prayer meeting for the Foreign Mission—an institution which has been uninterruptedly maintained for more than 50 years. Cook's Directory for the year 1843 gives the following particulars:—

“The General Baptists are numerous in Leicester and have seven places of worship. The chapel in Friar Lane is the oldest. It will seat 1075 and the average attendance is about 900. Four hundred and thirty children receive instruction in the Sabbath school; the number of teachers is 40. There is a library for the use of the congregation, and there are missionary, tract, benevolent, and other societies in active operation. Within the past few years the chapel has undergone various improvements, the expense of which has been met by friends of the cause.”

Another report in White's Directory for the same year, states:—“Friar Lane Chapel is the oldest General Baptist chapel in Leicester, has 1070 sittings, and is under the ministry of the Rev. S. Wigg. It was built in 1785 and enlarged in 1818.”

It may be well now to discontinue the History of the Church, and resume that of the Sunday School.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE HISTORY OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

(CONTINUED).

THE connection between the Church and Sunday School has from the commencement been an inseparable relationship. Although nominally under a separate government for many years, the connection between the two organisations has necessarily been of the closest and most cordial description. The School has been largely the nursery for the Church ; while, on the other hand, the Church has supplied both teachers and funds for carrying on the work of the School. A formal distinction between the two may have existed, but in reality their aims have been identical and their efforts characterised by united action.

It is a difficult matter to trace, with anything like regularity, the history of the school from 1823 to 1850, as the Minute Books relating to this lengthened period have unfortunately been lost.

From the Reports sent to the Association, it is evident that the teaching capacity was utilised to its fullest extent. They uniformly speak of increasing numbers and a prosperous condition.

In 1826 a Church Minute records:—

“That Brother Wigg is requested by the church, teachers, and children, to preach a sermon expressly to them once in a quarter.”

Up to 1827 the accommodation was exceedingly insufficient, and it was resolved to erect new school-rooms capable of holding 300 children. These were completed in the following year.

In the same year a room was built in Oxford Street, at a cost of £200, which was chiefly subscribed or collected by the teachers and scholars.

The work of the teachers, in connection with this latter school, was often carried on under unpleasant conditions. In passing to and fro from the school-room they were frequently subjected to intolerable insolence, and sometimes personal violence, from the dissolute persons who lived in the neighbourhood, which was then one of the lowest parts of the town. For many years, however, the work at this school was carried on most successfully, and greatly relieved the congested state of the central school. It was about this time that the system of rewards to scholars was considerably modified—the monetary value of tickets being abolished.

As an encouragement to good conduct, the most deserving scholar in the class was allowed to wear a medal throughout the day. For some considerable

time after the establishment of the school, the girls were required to wear white caps and tippets; but whether any distinctive dress was prescribed for the boys we are unable to ascertain.

Writing was taught in the school for 40 or 50 years after its commencement.

In the absence of the Minute Books there are no records of importance until 1838, when the Annual Report to the Church gives the following particulars :

“FRIAR LANE, LEICESTER.—From the Report to the Church we extract the following :—During the past year [1838] four of the scholars have joined the Church. Several of the female scholars have established a prayer-meeting at one of their houses, to implore the divine blessing on the labours of their teachers. We have formed Senior and Bible classes, these classes are composed of the elder scholars, and are set apart for higher religious instruction, and reading the Scriptures. We have a benevolent fund amongst the teachers. We have also opened a library for the use of the teachers and children—it contains 153 volumes.

Number of scholars	-	-	-	:	-	385
„ teachers who have been scholars	-					35
„ teachers who are members	-	-				27
Total number of teachers	-	-	-	-		45.”

The limited accommodation in the rooms, and the great number of applicants for admission, made it necessary to dismiss from the school all young persons over the age of 16, and as previously there had been no classes for senior scholars, no provision was made for their future instruction.



The following is an account of one of these dismissals :—

“DISMISSION OF SCHOLARS.—On Lord’s Day, Feb. 3rd, 1839, nineteen scholars were publicly and honourably dismissed from the Friar-lane Sabbath-school. Mr. Wigg preached from Jer. iii. 4, ‘Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth.’ Affected by the kind address which was then made to them, they met in two several parties, and resolved to express their regard by a small present. The females provided Medhurst’s ‘China ;’ and the males, Whiston’s ‘Josephus.’ Mr. Wigg was afterwards invited to meet them at a friend’s house to tea, when, on the books being presented, grateful and very suitable addresses were read by the dismissed scholars.—T.G.”

In 1843 the rooms, which were built to accommodate 300 scholars, were utilized for teaching 50 or 60 more than this number. Accordingly we find a resolution passed by the church on February 5th, 1844, to this effect :—

“That a Special Church Meeting be held next Monday evening to consider the propriety of erecting schoolrooms.”

The Church sanctioned this proposal, and it was resolved “to erect new schoolrooms at the back of the chapel.”

This however was deferred for two years, and on June 21st, 1846, the new building was opened at the same time that the chapel was also re-opened after renovation. The cost of this alteration was over £700, and the Oxford Street School was then merged into the central one.

The following, extracted from the *General Baptist Repository*, is a report of the opening of the new schoolrooms :—

“FRIAR LANE, LEICESTER.—New and spacious school-rooms, at the back of the chapel, having been erected at considerable expense, the chapel was re-opened for divine worship on Lord’s Day, June 21st, 1846. Sermons were preached by the Revs. J. J. Owen, of Castle Donington, and J. P. Mursell, of Leicester. A very interesting tea meeting was held on Monday evening, when Messrs. Wigg, Smith, Goadby, Wallis, Winks, Stevenson, and J. J. Owen, delivered addresses. Collections, proceeds of tea, and donations presented at the meeting, amounted to the liberal sum of £73.”

An Old Scholars’ Meeting was held in December of the same year, at which a large number were present. The pastor stated that there were ten ministers in the Denomination who had been formerly connected with the school, and that a number of others were engaged in supplying the village churches.

In March of this year (1846) Mr. Frederick Deacon, to whom reference has already been made, died at Quorndon, aged 60. He had been a disinterested and devoted supporter of the Sunday School movement for 40 years, and it was largely owing to his efforts that the Friar Lane School was established on so firm a basis. He was buried in the family vault in the chapel of which his father had been minister, and in which he himself had received his early religious instruction.

## CHAPTER IX.

## CONTINUATION OF MR. WIGG'S MINISTRY.

THE progress of the work of the church under the pastorate of Mr. Wigg was of as uniform and consistent a nature as one could expect to find. The various organisations of the church were well maintained and the religious enthusiasm often rose to a degree that would be characterised as sensational in the present day.

On the occasions of the administration of believers' baptism the chapel was frequently crowded in every part. The earnestness that was exhibited in the maintenance of the work of the church is indicated in the following paragraph, taken from the *General Baptist Repository* of 1847, the frequency with which such quotations occur becoming almost prosaic:—

“LEICESTER, *Friar Lane*. -The anniversary services of this place were held on Sabbath Day, Sep. 19th, when two sermons were preached by Mr. T. W. Mathews, of Boston; and on the following Wednesday about 300 persons took tea together. After tea, the pastor took the chair, by whom, as well by Messrs. Mathews and Marshall, interesting addresses were delivered. The amount raised by these services and by subscriptions, was upwards of £63, which, taking into consideration the almost unprecedented high price of provisions and

scarcity of work, may be considered a very generous sum. At this meeting collecting cards for the forthcoming year, to the amount of between £30 and £40, were taken by the friends."

An effort of a rather unique character is also recorded in the same periodical of February, 1854 :—

"LEICESTER, *Friar Lane*.—On Monday evening, Jan. 2nd, the annual tea-meeting for the aged poor in the church and congregation was held, and proved a season of much enjoyment. There were about forty aged persons present, some of them octogenarians ; and it was delightful to hear them tell of christian trials and joys long since passed away, and of desires and hopes that would shortly be realised by them. The provision made for their refreshment was abundant, and the benevolence of a friend furnished a plenteous supply of oranges and other fruit as a dessert after tea. Both those who provided the repast, and those who partook of it with them, spent a pleasant evening in social conversation, singing songs of praise, and offering fervent prayer. It is thought these are the only seasons in which some of our aged brethren and sisters see and converse with each other, as several of them are too feeble to come to their annual treat ; but were fetched and conveyed home again in flies."

In the year 1856 an important movement was made in the purchase of a public-house adjoining the chapel, known as the "Queen's Head." The existence of these premises had long been a source of great annoyance to the friends worshipping in this place, as the services were frequently interrupted by proceedings of a vastly different character. It was therefore considered a most fortunate circumstance

that gave the church the option of the purchase of this property.

The property was bought privately for £370 by Messrs. Hancock and Thornton, and afterwards transferred to the following Trustees appointed by the church:—Samuel Wright, sen., J. Beazley, G. Stafford, J. Thornton, J. Webster, Isaac Lunn, John Smith, T. Bailey, J. H. Johnson, J. R. Ratcliff, S. Curtis, E. Hancock, R. Crompton, S. Wright, jun., J. Ward and Samuel Wigg (pastor).

The church thus gradually secured a fine site in the very centre of the town and was able to extend the chapel premises in the most satisfactory manner possible. It will be remembered that 100 years ago the chapel is described as being "in a yard screened by buildings"; but by the enterprise of the members of the church this obscurity was gradually diminished, and one of the largest and most central sites in Leicester was secured for the combined purposes of public worship and Sunday School work.

In the following year the Bi-centenary Services in connection with this church were held on May 31st and June 1st (1857), and as the proceedings on this occasion were of considerable importance, we cannot do better than transcribe the full account of these services from the denominational periodical:

"BI-CENTENARY SERVICES AT FRIAR LANE CHAPEL.—The ancient Baptist church, Friar Lane, Leicester, celebrated the two hundredth year of its existence, and the thirty-sixth of the ministry of its present pastor, with more than ordinary demonstrations of joy. The chapel and school room were tastefully decorated: several devices beautifully wrought in leaves and sprigs of laurel, together with flowers of the season, adorned its walls and fronts of its galleries. Over the pulpit was displayed 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped us,' with other appropriate mottoes in every part of the sacred edifice. The entrance gates were nearly hidden with laurel, while on the top the eye rested on the following inscription:—'Enter His gates with thanksgiving,' and then over the doors, 'And His courts with praise.' A beautiful silk banner waved gracefully in the breeze from the top of the chapel. On Lord's Day morning, May 31, the services commenced with a prayer meeting at six o'clock, which was attended with a goodly number of the friends, while all present experienced it to be a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. At half-past ten public worship commenced, when the Rev. J. Burns, D.D., of London, preached an interesting and appropriate sermon from Eccle. vii, 10. In the afternoon, at three o'clock, the Sabbath School children were appropriately addressed by Mr. Winks, who also presented to twenty of the senior scholars handsomely bound Bibles. Dr. Burns again preached in the evening to a crowded and deeply attentive congregation a most eloquent discourse, selecting as the foundation of his sermon, Deut. i, 11. On Monday morning, June 1, at six o'clock, the friends again assembled for social prayer, and at eleven the Rev. H. Hunter, of Nottingham, preached an impressive sermon from Numb. c. 23, v. 23. In the afternoon a public tea meeting was held, the tops of the pews being floored to make room for the accommodation of the numbers who attended, some 500 or more being present. The public meeting commenced at six o'clock, R. Harris, Esq., in the chair. As soon as the chairman had opened the meeting by singing and prayer, he called upon Dr. Burns to

deliver the first address. Just as the Doctor was commencing, the Pastor, who had been laid aside by affliction, made his appearance on the platform and was received with great demonstrations of joy by the delighted assembly. This expression of kindly feeling subsiding, the Rev. Doctor proceeded to read the following address :—

‘Rev. and beloved Sir,—I am requested to present to you a testimonial from the church and congregation, and which has been cordially supported by many kind and liberal friends in the town. They desire thus to express towards you their high esteem, entire confidence, and unfeigned christian love. They pray that God may long spare your valuable life, abundantly bless you in your person and family, that He may greatly extend your usefulness, and that, finally, they, with yourself, may, through the infinite merits of the Saviour, be permitted to join the innumerable company, who worship before the Throne of God and the Lamb in glory everlasting. They finally desire to add their earnest solicitude that these bi-centenary services may be memorable in the grateful recollections of His people, and may form a new era in the history of this ancient church of Christ.’

Having finished the address, he then presented the Pastor with a testimonial, to which several esteemed friends of other denominations kindly contributed, among whom were the members for the Borough, and his worship the Mayor, consisting of an elegant and richly finished silver tea pot, with a silver salver, on which was engraved the following inscription :—

‘To the Rev. S. WIGG, the firm and zealous supporter of Civil and Religious Liberty, and the promulgator of the great and sublime truths of Christianity, this piece of plate is presented by the members and Congregation of the General Baptist Church, Friar Lane, in connection with several of the generous and philanthropic Ladies and Gentlemen of Leicester, as a small tribute of respect to his high Christian character, and

his untiring exertions in diffusing around the Divine Principles of the Gospel for 36 years in that place. ANNO DOMINI 1857.

In addition to the above he also presented an elegant purse containing twenty sovereigns, also a beautifully bound Bible and Hymn Book from the teachers of the Sabbath Schools ; then, turning to the pastor's wife, he presented to her a purse of six guineas. The Doctor resumed his seat and the Pastor immediately rose, labouring under great weakness, and evidently deeply affected, not having had any previous knowledge that such an exhibition of christian feeling would be manifested towards him ; he in a brief but feeling address returned his grateful thanks, with those of his wife, for this unexpected expression of christian sympathy and affection. The meeting then proceeded by the Rev. W. R. Stevenson, M.A., reading a brief history of the church compiled by the Pastor, after which the assembly was eloquently and effectively addressed by the Revds. W. Chapman, Longford, S. C. Sarjant, B.A. (Derby), W. R. Stevenson, M.A., J. P. Mursell, R. W. McAll, J. F. Winks, J. Bloodworth, and T. D. Dyson, Esq., the Chairman closing the meeting with an affectionate address. Thus ended the services of this delightful anniversary. The choir rendered efficient service by singing during the evening several select pieces of sacred music with propriety and judgment. On the following Tuesday the Sabbath School children, with their teachers walked in procession, and on their return to the chapel were regaled with tea, plum cake, &c."

The esteem in which Mr. Wigg was held was manifested on many occasions, and there are numerous indications of the sympathy that was felt by the church for him, owing to his delicate state of health. On May 24th, 1859, when it was becoming evident that the pastor was unequal to the full



duties of his office, the following resolutions were passed :—

“ILLNESS OF MR. WIGG.—Resolved that we express our sympathy with our beloved pastor, Mr. Wigg, in his severe affliction, and earnestly pray, if it be the Lord's will, that he may be restored, partially at least, to his work amongst us.”

“APPOINTMENT OF ASSISTANT MINISTER.—Resolved that under the trying circumstances of the Pastor and the Church, we cordially invite Mr. J. C. Pike, of Quorndon, to become the assistant of Mr. Wigg in the ministry and pastorate of this church. There was a very large attendance of the friends at this meeting, and it is believed the above resolutions were passed unanimously.”

Another interesting Church Minute records :—

“This Lord's Day morning, June 12th, 1859, Thomas Cooper, the late Chartist Leader and author of the ‘Purgatory of Suicides,’ was baptised at 7 o'clock, by Mr. Winks, in this chapel. Mr. Price, a Welsh minister, read and prayed, and gave an address. May he be ‘faithful unto death.’”

This prayer was most abundantly fulfilled—Mr. Cooper's subsequent career and earnest advocacy of the Gospel proving the thorough change that had taken place in his character and opinions.

In the year 1860 the chapel was again renovated at a cost of £130, the subscriptions towards this purpose amounting to £80 during the current year.

An interesting event is recorded in the following paragraph :—

“LEICESTER, *Friar Lane*.— On Lord’s Day, May 20th, two very impressive and eloquent sermons were preached in the Baptist Chapel, Friar Lane, Leicester, by the Rev. J. Burns, D.D., London, for the benefit of the Sabbath school, to crowded and attentive congregations. On Whit-Tuesday the teachers assembled their scholars for tea ; the school-rooms on the occasion being tastefully decorated with evergreens and flowers. At the end of the large room was placed a beautiful ‘*May Tree*,’ the branches of which were thickly laden and ornamented with upwards of two hundred presents as rewards for the children, consisting of various kinds of books, with useful and ornamental articles, the whole being given by teachers and friends. After tea, one of the senior scholars, a young man standing as a candidate for the fellowship of the church rose, and in a neat and excellent address, delivered with much feeling and modesty, presented his teacher with the following valuable volumes, elegantly bound :—D’ Aubigne’s ‘History of the Reformation,’ Paley’s ‘Evidences, with Notes,’ ‘Paragraph Bible,’ Cruden’s ‘Concordance,’ ‘Bible Cyclopædia,’ and ‘Biblical Atlas.’ This handsome present was acknowledged by an affectionate address to the young people of his class. The day was one of great enjoyment and will be long remembered by teachers and children. Collections on Lord’s Day, with subscriptions from teachers and children, amounted to the liberal sum of £40 4s. 5¼d.”

In the year 1861 the church suffered another severe loss by the death of the Rev. Samuel Wigg, which took place on July 18th. He had been pastor of the church for 40 years, and by his geniality of temperament, his earnestness in the work of the ministry,

his eloquence and ability in the discharge of his duties, he had fully justified the choice of the church and had endeared himself both to the members and his ministerial brethren. Although thirty-five years have elapsed since his death, he is still remembered with affection and respect as being a faithful minister of Jesus Christ, and a warm and sympathetic friend. He too, like Samuel Deacon, belonged to a past generation, and to a class of men to whom Nonconformists are deeply indebted for the religious liberty they possess.

## CHAPTER X.

## HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL (CONTINUED).

THE first noteworthy event in the History of the School following those recorded in a previous chapter was another Old Scholars' Meeting, held on December 26th, 1850.

The officers of the school evidently realised the importance of keeping in touch with those who had received their religious instruction there.

At this time the school had been in existence for 54 years, and the meeting proved how largely the teaching had been instrumental in fostering the religious life of its scholars, and also the advantage which the Denomination had gained by the pioneer work in other towns and villages, done by those who had formerly been connected with the school.

Old scholars came from great distances to attend this meeting, some of whom were ministers or

deacons of churches, others lay preachers or teachers in the schools of neighbouring towns and villages. It is no exaggeration to state that the General Baptist Churches all through the country were very greatly indebted to the Friar Lane School for the considerable help received from those who had been originally trained there.

The erection of the new schoolrooms in 1846 had rendered the Oxford Street Room somewhat superfluous, the conditions, too, under which it was carried on, and the insults to which the teachers were continually exposed, made it desirable that this school should be given up. It was accordingly sold in 1851, and after paying off the mortgage on the building the balance of £25 16s. 3d. was voted towards the debt on the Friar Lane schoolrooms.

The Oxford Street Room had been used for 25 years, not only as a Sunday School, but also for prayer meetings and other services, and the maintenance of it under many adverse circumstances is a testimony to the courage and loyalty of those who carried on the work.

Unfortunately the records dealing with the next 20 years are very imperfect. No Minute Books have been preserved, and consequently all trace of the progress of the school is lost, except what can be supplied from personal memory.

There is one point, however, that cannot be disputed. It is that the school possessed a band of teachers thoroughly devoted to their work, and who spared no effort in training the scholars under their care in the highest principles of religion and morality.

There are many persons now living to whom the mention of a few of these names will recall early associations of a very pleasant character: Joseph Beazley, Isaac Lunn, Joseph Thornton, H. Riley, J. Wilford, Samuel Curtis, Joseph Bowman, Isaac Wright, Joseph Barrows—these, and a number of others now living, maintained the school in a high state of efficiency.

The Anniversary Services were always times of great rejoicing and often of supreme effort.

It was no unusual thing to raise £60 or £70 at these services on behalf of the school funds.

The training of the children for the musical part of the service was always made a special feature, and reflected the greatest credit on those who were responsible for the work. For 30 years this efficient and careful training was conducted by Mr. Samuel Wright, and latterly by Mr. G. Merrall.

These anniversaries were always a rallying point for those who had been previously connected with the school but who had removed to other churches

in the town or neighbourhood. Words of congratulation and sympathy found free expression, and the occasions were characterised by many pleasant reminiscences and expressions of love for the old home.

The next forward movement was in 1872. The rooms had become again overcrowded and very badly adapted for the purposes of teaching.

Fortunately just at this time the property adjoining the chapel on the west side was offered for sale, and the officers, seeing that this was an opportunity not to be missed, arranged to purchase it for £790, and to recommend that it be used as a site for new schoolrooms. This addition was a most valuable acquisition, as it not only gave an opportunity of widening the street but it made a splendid frontage for the whole site, with ample room at the back for further extension of the premises at some future time.

The new property purchased comprised an old well-built house with a large garden at the rear. Even after the purchase considerable anxiety was felt as to the advisability of incurring such an expense as the new schoolrooms would entail.

However, the Rev. J. C. Pike, with his marvellous energy, was determined that no time should be lost, and being enthusiastically supported by the deacons and officers of the school, contracts were obtained

and the work of erection was commenced in less than twelve months from the time of purchase.

The memorial stone of the new schools was laid on Sept. 9th, 1873, by Ald. J. Swain. The total cost was estimated at £1,990, and towards this amount £600 was subscribed before the building was commenced. By the time the new schoolrooms were opened early in 1874, an additional £550 had been raised, leaving a balance only of about £600.

The Superintendents at this time were Mr. W. T. Wright and Mr. Samuel Wright, and the Secretary was Mr. S. Flint, who was subsequently appointed as one of the Superintendents.

As recently as 1878, the collections and subscriptions at the school Anniversary amounted to £135 13s. od., the preachers on that occasion being the Revs. Dr. Clifford and Ll. Parsons; while, in the following year, they amounted to £52 3s. 2d. in collections only.

In the year 1880 the school lost by death one of its oldest and most respected workers—Mr. Isaac Lunn. The following record in the Teachers' Minute Book shows the esteem in which he was held :—

“Teachers' Meeting, Sep. 7th, 1880.

Our aged and highly esteemed friend and fellow worker, Mr. Isaac Lunn, having died within the last few days, it is



resolved that the following lines be placed in our Minute Book :—

‘The teachers desire to take this the earliest opportunity of placing on their minutes a record of the death of their old and valued friend, Mr. Isaac Lunn, who has been a teacher of the school for 55 years, and for a great part of that time a superintendent. They desire to glorify God in him, rejoicing in the long, useful, peaceful and cheerful life he lived in their midst. The teachers desire also to express to his relatives their sincerest sympathy with them in their sore bereavement, and pray that divine peace and strength may be granted unto them.’”

Mr. Lunn had not only been an active worker in the school, but had also served the church as a deacon for many years, his energies being thoroughly absorbed in the work of the church with which he had been so long and honorably connected.

Another record taken from the Minutes is of interest, as being the last instance of an Old Scholars’ meeting similar to those which had formerly been held annually in December :—

“Old Teachers’ and Scholars’ Tea Meeting, April 19, 1881.

An Old Teachers’ and Scholars’ Tea Meeting was held on the above date in connection with our school.

About 150 sat down to tea, after which a public meeting was held under the presidency of the pastor, the Rev. J. H. Atkinson. Several letters were read by the Secretary, received from old teachers and scholars living at a distance.

A very interesting paper was read by Mr. Ashby, giving a brief history of the school. Two very suitable and profitable addresses were given by the Rev. J. Lewitt, of Worcester, and the Rev. J. Turner, of Burnley. Several old teachers and scholars also addressed the meeting, and thus a very enjoyable evening was spent."

The following statistics in reference to the school at this period show the magnitude of the work carried on :—

"Number of Teachers	-	-	-	53
Number of Infant Scholars	-	-	-	100
Under 15 years of age	-	-	-	414
Over 15        "       "	-	-	-	303
				<hr/>
Total number of Scholars	-			817

Number of Scholars who are Church Members, 88."

In 1885 the school was somewhat weakened by the removal of a number of the teachers and scholars to the Memorial Hall, New Walk ; but the work was well maintained until the re-union took place in the year 1891.

Since that time the progress of the school has been steady and encouraging. It must not be forgotten that Sunday school work in the present day is attended with difficulties which did not exist forty or fifty years ago. The extension of our national system of education has made instruction in secular

subjects unnecessary, so that the whole efforts of the teachers are concentrated on religious instruction. Formerly, even the mere rudiments of education could only be acquired at the Sunday school, and this furnished one of the strongest inducements for attendance.

In spite of the present temporary reaction, the tendency of the time is undoubtedly in favour of a purely unsectarian system of education being provided by the nation. This will make the work of Sunday schools increasingly important, and no effort should be spared for carrying on this useful branch of christian service.

It is hoped that this record of unselfish devotion and sacrifice may assist in giving inspiration to those who may continue the work in the future.

The following copy of the early Rules of the Sunday School is exceedingly quaint and interesting.

They were probably drawn up shortly after the school was established, and indicate concisely part of the system which was adopted in its management.

The reproduction is as nearly as possible in the original form.

RULES  
FOR THE REGULATION OF THE  
SUNDAY SCHOOL,  
BELONGING TO THE  
*FRIAR LANE MEETING.*

1. The number admitted shall not at present exceed 40, including Boys and Girls.

2. A Committee chosen annually, shall judge of all applications for the admission of children: and none shall be admitted but by the approbation of this Committee, or the major part of them.

3. The Committee shall meet every Month to receive applications, to enquire into the state of the School, and to make the necessary Regulations.

4. The Children shall regularly attend at the Vestry every Lord's Day by *Nine* in the Morning, and by *half-past One* in the Afternoon. Every Child shall come clean washed and combed.

5. The Names of all the Children shall be called over twice every Lord's Day by the Teachers, an account being taken of those that are absent, or come late, and the causes of their absence, &c., be examined. Such Children who absent themselves, or are detained by their Parents without sufficient cause, shall be reported to the Committee that they may be excluded.

6. Suitable Rewards shall be given to such Children who attend regularly, and behave well: for which purpose, a Sermon will be preached annually, and a Collection made for the benefit of the School.

## CHAPTER XI.

## REV. J. C. PIKE'S MINISTRY.

MR. PIKE, having been assistant minister for two years, it was only to be expected that he should receive a cordial and almost unanimous vote to the sole pastorate. His recognition took place on Dec. 26th, 1861, and the Church Minutes record that the same occasion was observed as the "Jubilee of our venerable brother, Samuel Wright"—he having been a member of the church for 50 years.

Mr. Pike's ministry was characterised throughout by an unparalleled earnestness and devotion to the interests of the church over which he presided. During his ministry he was the indefatigable Secretary of the General Baptist Foreign Missionary Society, but this onerous duty did not interfere with his work as Pastor of the Friar Lane Church. Besides his untiring attention to the financial affairs of the church, he was ever ready with wise counsel

for those who sought his advice, and his helpful discourses will long live in the memory of those who listened to them.

Immediately on his appointment to the pastorate, his mind was set upon the modernising of the chapel, the arrangements of which were antiquated and inconvenient.

About this time (1862) a Church Minute records that "Mr. Cowley had endeavoured to collect subscriptions for the purchase of a harmonium, but the sum promised was insufficient, and the matter dropped."

The old system of brass and wind instruments to supplement the choral part of the service had only recently been discontinued, and the quaint arrangement of the ponderous wooden pitch-pipe was in use. In the following year, however, sufficient funds were raised for the purchase of a harmonium—an innovation that was regarded as little less than sacrilegious by some of the friends.

For several years Mr. Pike devoted a considerable part of his time towards raising the nucleus of a fund towards the rebuilding of the chapel; and the necessary plans and contracts having been considered, the work was commenced on December 4th, 1865, and in the autumn of the following year the new building

was re-opened for worship, the cost having been nearly £1700.

An application to the Charity Commissioners was made in 1867 to borrow £1000 on mortgage, to be repaid in 25 years. The endowment was declared to be of not greater value than £150 per annum.

The Trustees confirmed by the deed were Geo. Stafford, Isaac Lunn, John Smith, Thos. Bailey, J. H. Johnson, J. R. Ratcliff, S. Wright, junr., and Joseph Ward; and the following new Trustees were appointed by the Commissioners—J. C. Pike, W. T. Wright, William Ashby, John Miller, Thos. Moss and S. C. Hubbard.

For some years the large expenditure incurred on the new building proved a heavy strain on the resources of the church, but by the untiring efforts of the pastor, supplemented by the willing co-operation of the members, the liability was gradually reduced.

On April 6th, 1869, the Church Minute Book records the death of the senior deacon, Mr. Samuel Wright. His life was such an example of faithful devotion to the welfare of the church, and he was so well known in the town and neighbourhood, that the following brief biography from the pen of the man who knew him most intimately seems worthy of preservation.

## "THE LATE MR. SAMUEL WRIGHT, OF LEICESTER.

*Substance of an Address at the Friar Lane Chapel,  
April 4th, 1869, by the Rev. J. C. Pike.*

It is not often that the pastor of a church has the opportunity of addressing his friends under circumstances similar to our own this day. A father in Israel has been taken away,—one who for nearly fifty-eight years, or during the lives of two generations, has been a consistent and honourable member of this church, and who for nearly forty-two years had shared the duties and responsibilities of the deacon's office. Mr. Wright was born at Leicester, April, 1785. He died March 19th, 1869, being within a few days of eighty-four years of age. I find, on searching the records of our old church books, that our departed friend was baptized here, with three others, on Nov. 17, 1811. The minister of the church at the time was the Rev. John Deacon, who, a few months before, had resumed the pastoral office. The deacons were John Wright, John Johnson, and Frederick Deacon. I am not aware that John Wright was any relative of Samuel Wright's, and I have not ascertained exactly how long he had been a deacon; he was one in 1807, and continued in office until his death in 1815. Thus, through the greater part of the present century the name of 'Wright' has been familiar among the office-bearers of this church.

The first mention that I find of Mr. S. Wright's name, after joining the church, is in December, 1815. It had been resolved unanimously to adopt the plan of *weekly subscriptions* for defraying the necessary expenses of the church; suggesting to us that 'there is nothing new under the sun,' unless it were in the sterner methods adopted by our fathers in carrying out their decisions. For the above plan was not only recommended to the members, but it was *required* that every one who was able, should contribute his quota towards these expenses. Six collectors were appointed, of whom Mr. Wright was one. From that day to the last day of his life he ever took a lively interest in the financial welfare and prosperity of the church.



At that period it was customary to bury the dead in the graveyard adjoining the chapel. For many years Mr. Wright sustained the office of sexton and chapel-keeper, but relinquished it in the year 1827 that he might serve the church in the office of deacon. Twelve friends were nominated on the occasion, and three were elected from the number. The votes were as follows : S. Wright, 78 ; R. Senior, 50 ; Jos. Harrison, 42. These figures sufficiently speak for the estimation in which our brother was held by the church forty-two years ago ; nor had they reason to repent their choice. Through all these years he has served the church diligently and faithfully. He used the office of a deacon well, and purchased to himself a good degree.

My acquaintance with Mr. Wright only dates back for ten years. My further remarks will apply to this period. I shall speak of our esteemed friend and father as I have known him. I do not suppose that he was perfect. He was human, as we all are. Considering the troublous times through which the church had passed during some of the years of his connection with it, it would have been strange indeed if all men had spoken well of him. I can also imagine that there was at times an apparent austerity and harshness in his manner that proved displeasing to some ; but I think any thing of this kind was in *appearance*, rather than in reality ; and for myself I can testify that I never heard from him a discourteous or an unkind word. His demeanour toward me was uniformly respectful and considerate. I have heard of lordly deacons in some churches, but am thankful that it has not been my lot to be associated with such. It was the delight of our friend to minister in any way that he could to the comfort of his pastor, and to co-operate with him in his plans for usefulness. Let me mention one way in which he ever caused me great encouragement and joy. *He was always in his place.* He never ran away after novelty ; rarely was he absent from a Sabbath service for nearly sixty years ; and at the prayer meeting, the weekly lecture, the

deacon's meeting, the church meeting, he was there regular as the day, punctual to the minute! Whoever was absent, I was sure that he would be present. Many a day must pass before I can forget his cordial greetings as I entered the vestry on the Sabbath morning and evening, and ere I can lose the impression of his familiar and venerable form in this sanctuary. Would that our churches were more largely composed of such *reliable* men and women.

Mr. Wright did not often speak much about his own experience. Any one who heard him pray would feel assured that he was a man who walked with God. Many of you can remember how fervently he pleaded at the throne of grace for the peace and prosperity of Zion, and for the conversion of sinners, especially any unsaved ones among the families of this church and congregation.

A month ago to-day when I entered the vestry I perceived that he was very hoarse. I said, 'You will not be able to give out the hymns to-day,' and offered to relieve him, little dreaming that we should never again hear his voice in this place. He attended at the Lord's supper in the afternoon, and that was the last time he was permitted to meet with us. The glorified Saviour was represented as saying to one and another of the guests at His table, 'What is thy petition?' and one of the answers suggested was, 'Lord, that Thou wilt keep me to the end, and in death receive me to Thyself.' In reference to our departed friend, 'Even while we were yet speaking, the Lord heard.' A few days of lingering affliction, and he is gone; 'Absent from the body, present with the Lord.' He was unable to say much during his last illness. This is a case in which we care not to know how the servant of Jesus died, we know how he *lived*.

I would invite the special attention of *young men* to this example of Mr. Wright. See what religion would do for you, and see what it would enable you to accomplish in spite of every disadvantage. It needs not wealth, nor rank, nor position, nor

learning, to secure great usefulness in the Church of Christ. Mr. Wright was a needle-maker by trade ; before his conversion he used to occupy a considerable portion of the Sabbath in taking out his work, but as soon as he was brought to Christ he resolved to make the sacrifice, and abandon all Sunday trading. His particular branch of trade suffered great reverses, so that to the end of life he was comparatively a poor man. He had, however, a large heart and a liberal spirit. He was rich in faith and good works. He did what he could ; and now, in a good old age, he has left the world respected, mourned for, beloved ! Children, and children's children, revere his memory and call him blessed. The history of Samuel Wright is another illustration and verification of the divine promise, 'Them that honour Me I will honour.'"

The latter part of Mr. Pike's ministry was characterised by considerable effort in the extension of village work, and also by a determination to remove the debt on the chapel as quickly as possible.

In September, 1870, the Church Minutes record

"An application received from the little church at Fleckney requesting to be united as a branch of the Friar Lane Church."

It was accordingly resolved to do what was possible for the revival of the cause in this village, and a committee was appointed to consider the best means of carrying on the work.

After considerable effort the difficulties were found to be so great in obtaining the requisite supplies, that in December of 1873

“It was announced that the Committee had determined to discontinue the superintendence of this branch or the finding of supplies next year. We had done our best and failed.”

On the receipt of this resolution the trustees earnestly requested the church to reconsider their decision, and a further attempt was made to carry on the services in the evening of the Lord's Day only.

This resolution of the church was attended with happy results. Obstacles were gradually surmounted, the congregations improved, and owing to the introduction of various manufactures in the village, the removals were diminished.

During the twenty years that have supervened this branch has made steady progress, and at the present time the chapel accommodation is insufficient for the congregation, and funds are being raised for the erection of a new building. The members' names are enrolled with the Friar Lane Church and there is every probability of continued progress.

Another station in which the Friar Lane Church has taken considerable interest is the small cause at Croft.

Through the instrumentality of the Rev. J. C. Pike, preaching was commenced in a barn at this village in 1874, but although some of the members are affiliated with the Leicester church, and friendly

advice and help have been continually rendered, there has never been any actual union.

In 1883 Mr. H. D. Pochin built the present chapel at his own cost, the fittings and furniture being provided by the congregation. His brother, Mr. John Pochin, who has been for many years an officer of the Friar Lane Church, has always taken a deep interest in the cause at Croft, and his residence there has been of material assistance in carrying on the work. At present the cause is conducted by a joint committee of various denominations, and is the only Nonconformist congregation in the village.

At the same period (1874) the following resolution appears on the Church Minutes:—

“Resolved that we feel it very desirable that Carley Street should be re-opened as a branch General Baptist Station, and we engage to take the necessary steps for this purpose. . . . That we confer with the Archdeacon Lane and Dover Street Churches with a view to united action in the matter.”

In the succeeding year the three churches carried this resolution into effect, and subscribed liberally towards the support of the church. Ultimately, the services of the Rev. J. C. Forth were secured, and the church not only became self-supporting, but by the valuable missionary work it has accomplished, has fully justified the efforts of the promoters.

During this time a determined effort was made to reduce the debt on the newly-erected schools in connection with Friar Lane, but although a resolution was passed to pay off the whole of the amount, if possible in three years, the self-denying Pastor was not permitted to see the accomplishment of the work.

In September, 1874, a meeting of a most enthusiastic and gratifying character was held, at which the Rev. J. C. Pike was presented with a purse containing £77 8s. 1d., as a testimonial to his indefatigable exertions in connection with the promotion of the church work.

In the same year the church received, as a gift from three friends, a handsome and powerful organ, the cost of which was £320. The names of the donors were—Messrs. Joseph Jarrom, George Stafford, and Thomas Stirk.

The work of Mr. Pike was now rapidly drawing to a close. In 1875 it became apparent that, in spite of his indomitable will, he was not equal to the continuous strain to which he had been subjected. Frequent brief rests became necessary ; but notwithstanding all that medical skill and loving care could accomplish, the end came on August 11, 1876—after only a few days cessation from actual work.

As an evidence of the high respect in which he was held in the town, it is only necessary to state

that thirteen local ministers assisted at his funeral and that the service in the chapel was attended by a crowded and sympathetic congregation.

A few brief extracts from a memoir written by one of his sons will not be out of place in this history:

“THE LATE REV. J. C. PIKE, OF LEICESTER.

JAMES CAREY PIKE, the second son of the much venerated John Gregory Pike, was born in Willow Row, Derby, June 26, 1817.

After leaving school the youth was sent to learn the printing business. It was hard work. He had to stand from seven in the morning until eight at night, with slight intermissions for meals. This continued between two and three years, when, in consequence of having ‘manifested such a devoted desire to study for the ministry,’ he was released from the office.

On November 19, 1837, Mr. Pike commenced the stated ministry at Ely Place Chapel, Wisbech. He went only for a month; but did not leave again. For a while he was the assistant of the Rev. Joseph Jarrom, then in feeble health; afterwards he became pastor of the church.

In November, 1851, Mr. Pike received a unanimous invitation to the pastorate of Brook Street Chapel, Derby, and one also to that of Dover Street, Leicester. The latter he accepted, and commenced his labours with the new year. This pastorate lasted a little more than five years and a half, and during part of it Mr. Pike resided at Quorndon, near Loughborough. This he continued to do until about Michaelmas, 1861, when he became pastor of the church in Friar Lane, Leicester, on the

death of the Rev. S. Wigg, an office which he had already practically held for two years and a half, in consequence of Mr. Wigg being laid aside from active duty. Prior to this Mr. Pike had ministered to a congregation of friends who seemed determined that he should not leave Leicester. He may, therefore, be said to have been a minister in that town for little short of a quarter of a century.

At the Association in June, 1855, Mr. Pike was chosen Secretary of the Foreign Missionary Society in the place of his father, to whose faith and zeal it owed its origin, and whose devoted service was rendered up to the very moment of what seemed rather a translation than death.

Two or three years after Mr. Pike became pastor of the church at Friar Lane, he began to contemplate the erection of a new chapel. The difficulties in the way of this undertaking were so many that it seemed, when he first mentioned it, like a dream, never to be realised. There were times when he almost gave up the project; but he was not the man to yield to difficulties before they were proved to be insuperable. Those who can recollect the dismal chapel of fifteen or a dozen years ago can appreciate the contrast now presented by the new and commodious pile of buildings in which the needs of the congregation and the schools are amply met. At first it seemed as if the whole burden rested upon the minister; and the writer well remembers the gentleman who gave the first £50 (though he neither belonged to Leicester nor the denomination) saying to him that he thought Mr. Pike was himself doing more than he ought. The foundation-stone was laid January 23rd, 1866, by Mr. Robert Wherry, and on August 15th of the same year the opening services were held. It was an interesting day; and one sees now in imagination the pastor enter the pulpit for the first time to offer prayer. Who, then, could tell him that ten years hence, to the very day, his body would be borne into the chapel and placed before those communion rails on its way to the tomb; whilst from that pulpit his brethren would speak



of him as gone to his reward ! These August dates, as we have already seen, are somewhat singular, and there are others which the writer cares not to mention. The deceased once observed, 'I am always thankful when August is past. It is often a very sickly month.'

The long and tedious winter of 1875-6 was very trying to him ; but when the much wished for summer came it brought little accession of strength. It was touching to see disappointment after disappointment meekly borne as one after another of the engagements which, in the distance, he hoped to fulfil were seen to be impossible as the time drew near. It was a great trial not to be present at the Derby Association. An abstract of his twenty-first report was read at the Foreign Missionary Meeting—very touching in its reference to the year's death roll, and impressive in its summon of the living to new enterprise. He had himself wept over it ! Still he kept hopeful, as if death might not touch him yet—said he felt as if he could work as well as ever. Others could see the grim circle narrowing round him ; but he saw it not ; and even the last morning after two of his sons, who were watching him, had seen in a most marked manner that singular prelude to death in which the whole contour of the countenance and its hue are altered, he would sit up and read, and attend to his toilet. He knew not death was upon him ; or, if for a moment he guessed it, that moment there was no more that it could do. One sentence in the last letter that the writer of this sketch received from the departed, little more than a fortnight before the great change took place, sums up the matter, exhibiting at once his feeling and his faith. 'Somehow I have an impression that, in answer to many prayers, I shall be restored for a time, and permitted yet to work for the Master ; but I leave myself and all that concerns me in the Lord's hands. I know he will do all for the best.' In this confidence he lived and died.

*Birmingham.*

E. C. PIKE."

Shortly after Mr. Pike's death, a Memorial Tablet was placed on the West wall of the chapel, containing the following inscription :—

IN  
LOVING REMEMBRANCE OF  
JAMES CAREY PIKE,  
FOR 17 YEARS THE DEVOTED PASTOR  
OF THIS CHURCH,  
AND FOR 21 YEARS THE INDEFATIGABLE  
SECRETARY OF THE GENERAL BAPTIST  
FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY,  
BORN IN DERBY, JUNE 26TH, 1817;  
DIED IN LEICESTER, AUGUST 11TH, 1876.  
DURING HIS MINISTRY, AND LARGELY  
THROUGH HIS EFFORTS,  
THIS CHAPEL AND THE ADJOINING  
SCHOOL ROOMS WERE BUILT.

---

FAITHFUL IN DOCTRINE, EARNEST IN WORKING,  
ABUNDANT IN LABOURS,  
HE WAS "A GOOD MINISTER OF JESUS CHRIST."

Testimony to the value of Mr. Pike's work comes to us from all sources, and his devotion, energy, and self-sacrifice cannot well be over-estimated.

## CHAPTER XII

## REV. J. H. ATKINSON'S MINISTRY.

IN the December succeeding Mr. Pike's death, the Rev. J. H. Atkinson, of Hitchin, was unanimously invited to undertake the pastorate of the church. His ministry commenced on the third Sunday of 1877, under very happy auspices. The work was carried on harmoniously and successfully for seven years; cordial relationships existing between the pastor and the people—a feeling which has been maintained till the present time.

The liquidation of the debt on the chapel and schools still occupied the undivided attention of the church, and it was not long before the buildings were entirely freed from liability, with the exception of a mortgage of £600 on the recently erected school-rooms.

Simultaneously with the settlement of Mr. Atkinson it was resolved to adopt the system of weekly offerings—a form of contribution which it will be remembered was thought practicable 60 years previously; proving that new methods are not always as original as they may seem.

In the year 1879 a proposal was made to broaden the basis of the Church by adopting the principle of Open Fellowship, the Deacons having brought to the Church a recommendation to this effect; but when the vote of the members was taken the resolution was negatived, only a small number supporting the proposed alteration.

It was in this year that an effort was made to extend the work at the Fleckney branch: it being thought possible that the services of a permanent Evangelist for that and the neighbouring villages might be successfully maintained. The Rev. R. Fountain was accordingly invited to take the oversight of this branch, and for several years worked there with success.

This effort has eventually culminated in a considerable strengthening of the church at Fleckney, with a result which has already been indicated.

In reference to the reduction of the debt on the chapel, already referred to, the following account, giving, as it does, some details and figures connected with the enterprise, may be of interest:—

“LEICESTER, *Friar Lane*.—EXTINCTION OF CHAPEL DEBT.

The new chapel, opened Aug. 15, 1866, and spacious school-rooms which have since been built, have cost, including a debt on the old chapel, upwards of £7,000, the whole of which, excepting a mortgage of £600 on the land on which the school-rooms are built, and which is intended to remain for the present, has been cleared off. At the beginning of 1879 the

debt was £1,050. The senior deacon generously promised £300 towards it, providing the rest could be forthcoming. A bazaar realised £200; the school found £200; generous friends outside contributed, and all, pastor and deacons, members, teachers, and children, did something, and on Christmas Eve the last shilling was contributed, and thanksgiving services were therefore held. On Sunday, Dec. 28, the pastor, Rev. J. H. Atkinson preached from Neh. iv. 6, and from Psalm cxxvi. 3. No collections were made, but the thankofferings amounted to £25. A thanksgiving tea meeting followed, Dec. 29. About 400 were present. The public meeting was presided over by Mr. Pickard, sen., and congratulatory addresses were delivered by the pastor, Messrs. J. Pochin, G. Stafford, Lunn, W. Wright, Holland, W. Ashby, R. W. Pike, Moss, and Mee. Affectionate references were made to the late much esteemed pastor, the Rev. J. C. Pike, at all the services. It was felt that the erection of the new buildings was mainly due to his untiring devotion and persevering zeal."

Mr. Atkinson's ministry continued until 1883, when he removed to Liverpool. During this period there are no particular events which call for special record, the Church work having been directed rather to the strengthening of existing organisations, than to the initiation of new enterprises. Steady additions were made to the roll of membership, although, owing to the extension of the town, and the consequent removal of members to great distances from the chapel, the numbers did not greatly increase. The Institutions of the Church were, however, well maintained and supported, and the old traditions lived in the minds and hearts of the people.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## RECENT EVENTS.

ON the removal of Mr. Atkinson to Liverpool the Church invited the Rev. G. Eales to succeed him, and his ministry continued until 1891. This period was characterised by active work amongst the young people—the number attending from the latter part of Mr. Atkinson's ministry up to the present time being an encouraging and satisfactory feature, and testifying to the great interest exhibited on their behalf.

In October, 1885, an unfortunate separation took place, a number of members having resigned, who subsequently formed themselves into a Church, and for some years worshipped at the Sunday School Memorial Hall, New Walk.

This new Church invited the Rev. Jno. Evans to become their minister, and he, having accepted the invitation, commenced his pastorate in June, 1890. Various kinds of christian work were commenced, amongst which were a Sunday School, a Benevolent Society, a Literary Society, and other auxiliaries.

On the resignation of Mr. Eales in 1891, this cause was merged into the Friar Lane Church—the reunion being a source of gratification to many of those who had been fellow workers in former days.

During the existence of the Memorial Hall Church, the Rev. Isaac Stubbins had taken an active and deep interest in its welfare. He was unanimously chosen as the presiding elder, and his death, on March 26th, 1889, at the age of 76, was a source of deep sorrow, not only to the Church with which he was connected, but also to all those who had known his sterling worth and devoted adherence to the interests of the Denomination.

From 1836 to 1864 he had been engaged in active service in connection with the Orissa Mission—his contemporaries (all of whom had some direct relation with the Friar Lane Church) being the Revds. John Buckley, Henry Wilkinson, Wm. Brooks, and Wm. Bailey.

His intense interest in missionary work was maintained to the close of his life, and his advocacy of the claims of the Orissa Mission was constant and earnest.

For many years he was identified with the Friar Lane Church and rendered valuable help, not only by preaching when required, but also by his wise counsel and active work amongst the members.

Respecting the history of recent years, it is not necessary that much should be added: events being fresh in the memory of all those connected with the work of the church.

The various organisations are carried on with efficiency and success; the institutions of the church being well maintained. The preaching of the present Pastor is of a very high order, and is characterised by earnestness and power. The demands upon Nonconformist ministers in this respect seem to be getting more severe, but Mr. Evans fully meets the requirements of modern ideas, and maintains the dignity and power of the preacher's office. The congregations are good, and the indications of a sound and earnest work are numerous.

The difficulties attending the work of churches, situated in the centre of large towns, are increasing year by year. In former times the area of influence was small, and it was not a difficult matter to keep in touch with the members.

Recently, the continual migration to the suburbs has considerably weakened the central churches, and reduced the number of those engaged in active work. Still a smaller sphere of influence does not imply a decrease in usefulness, and if conditions are changed, new methods must and will be adopted, which will be equally successful in the spread of



the gospel, and in proving its adaptation to the needs of humanity.

The Church Roll, having been carefully revised up to date, shows the present number of members (including the Fleckney Branch) to be 365.

In reviewing the history of this ancient church, one cannot help being impressed with the earnestness and single-mindedness which has characterised those who have been most successful in their work.

Even although conditions have changed, and the necessities of modern life have imposed new restrictions and fresh methods, it may be to our advantage to earnestly consider the enthusiasm which characterised earlier efforts, and produced a devotion which at times appears strange and unnatural.

We may not always admire the old methods of Christian work, but we cannot doubt the sincerity of the men and women engaged in it, and the adaptability of these methods to the conditions of the age.

May the same spirit inspire us, and the same devotion direct our efforts, although our systems may be new, and the conditions under which we work be changed.



*A P P E N D I X.*



## FRIAR LANE GENERAL BAPTIST CHURCH.

*Founded probably about 1650.*

## LIST OF PASTORS :

CONIERS CONGRAVE	-	-	}	1651	...
THOMAS ROGERS	-	-	}		
THOMAS DAVYE	-	-	-	1709	...
W. ARNOLD ( <i>Probably</i> )	-			1730	— 1760
— JOHNSON	-	-	-	No date.	
S. DURANCE	-	-	-	—	
JOHN DEACON	-	-	-	1783	— 1821
SAMUEL WIGG	-	-	-	1821	— 1861
JAMES CAREY PIKE	-	-		1861	— 1876
JAMES H. ATKINSON	-	-		1877	— 1883
GEORGE EALES	-	-		1883	— 1891
JOHN EVANS	-	-		1890	— 1891 <i>Mem. Hall.</i>
„	-	-		1891	— <i>Friar Lane.</i>

OFFICERS  
OF THE  
CHURCH AND SUNDAY SCHOOL, 1896.

---

CHURCH.

*Pastor:* Rev. JNO. EVANS.

*Elders:*

WM. ASHBY.

JOHN POCHIN.

T. H. STRETTON.

*Deacons:*

E. J. AMATT.

G. MERRALL.

J. CHESTER.

W. H. MILLMAN.

W. FARMER.

R. W. PIKE.

S. FLINT.

J. SPIERS (*Secretary*).

S. C. HUBBARD.

W. TAYLOR (*Treasurer*)

*Choir Master:* G. MERRALL.

*Organist:* A. AMATT.

---

SUNDAY SCHOOL.

*Superintendents:*

S. FLINT.

G. MERRALL.

*Secretaries:*

ARTHUR D. ASHBY.

JAMES RILEY (*pro tem*).

## INSTITUTIONS OF THE CHURCH.

## BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.

<i>Treasurer</i>	-	-	Mr. T. H. STRETTON.
<i>Collector</i>	-	-	Mrs. TAYLOR.

This Society was formed in 1860 for the purpose of affording assistance to those members of the church and congregation who needed help. The sphere of influence has now been widened, and although the main purpose is to assist those connected with the church, a large number of others in needy circumstances receive grants from the Committee. The annual income is now about £16.

## PROVIDENT SOCIETY.

Formed in 1849. Objects: to secure to survivors a small sum at the death of each member. A levy of 6d. per member is made when a death occurs. The present number of members is 145.

## TRACT SOCIETY.

<i>Treasurer</i>	-	-	Mr. S. FLINT.
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This Society was formed about the year 1845, and with slight intermissions has continued its work since that date. The number of tracts distributed yearly is over 7,000, and the Annual Income averages about £15.

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